



THOSE BREWSTER CHILDREN

Florence
Morse
Kingsley



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Those Brewster Children





The occasion was not wholly barren of material
for a trained psychologist (page 56)

Those Brewster Children

By

Florence Morse Kingsley

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Smith," "And So They Were
Married," etc.

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By Emily Hall Chamberlain

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“Cwyin’?” he observed in a bird-like voice

ILLUSTRATIONS

The occasion was not wholly barren of material for a trained psychologist (page 56) . . . *Frontispiece*

"Cwyin'?" he observed in a bird-like voice . . . *Facing page* 146

"She'll remember it, you'll find, better than one of Mrs. Stanford's whippings" " " 182



I

ELIZABETH BREWSTER sat by the window of her sewing-room in the fading light of the winter afternoon. She had been straining her eyes a little over her work and the intent look did not leave them as she glanced out into the gathering dusk. She could see all three of the children at their play on the lawn. Carroll, tall and sturdy for his eight years; Doris slim and active, her reddish blond hair streaming out from under her hood and blowing about her eager little face, and three-year-old Baby Richard, toiling manfully to keep up with the others as they piled damp snow-balls into the rude semblance of a human figure.

“Darlings!” murmured the mother to herself, a happy light seemingly reflected from the red winter sunset shining on her face. She raised the sash a hand’s breadth and called to them, “Come in now, children; it is growing too cold for Richard to stay out any longer.”

She glanced regretfully at her unfinished

sewing as she rose, gathering up thread, scissors and thimble with the absent-minded carefulness born of long habit. Something was scorching on the kitchen range, she feared, a well-founded distrust of the heavy-handed Norwegian maid hastening her steps down the precipitous back stairway.

The range was heated to redness, and several saucepans huddled together over the hottest place were bubbling furiously. Celia, the maid, was setting the table in the dining-room, with slow, meditative motions like those of an ox. She did not appear at all disturbed at sight of her mistress hurriedly dashing water into one of the utensils, from which arose an evil-smelling steam.

“Oh, Celia! how many times must I tell you to cook the vegetables in plenty of water?” demanded Mrs. Brewster, in despairing tones. “And look! your fire is almost up to the grid-dles. Have you shaken it down this afternoon?”

The girl shook her big head with its untidy braids of straw-coloured hair. “Naw!” she observed explosively, after a pause filled with the noise of descending ashes.

"You should say 'no, Mrs. Brewster,' or 'no, ma'am,'" her mistress said, with an obvious effort after self-control. "Try not to forget again, Celia. Now you may go up to your room and make yourself tidy before you finish dinner."

The girl obeyed with the heavy, lurching steps of one crossing a ploughed field. Elizabeth, hurriedly opening doors and windows to the frosty sunset caught sight of her three children still busy about their snow image.

"Carroll, dear!" she called, "didn't you hear mother when she told you to come in?"

The boy turned his handsome head. "Yes, mother; I did hear you," he said, earnestly, "an' I told Doris to go straight into the house an' bring Richard; but she wouldn't go. I had to finish this first, you see, 'cause I've planned——"

"Come in now," interrupted his mother, forestalling the detailed explanation sure to follow. "Come in at once!"

The boy dropped the snow-shovel with which he was carefully shaping the base of his image. "Don't you hear mother, Doris?" he

demanded in a clear, authoritative voice. "You must go right in this minute an' take Buddy."

The little girl thrust out the tip of a saucy pink tongue at her brother.

"Mother said you too, Carroll Brewster; you don't have to tell me an' Buddy. Does he, mother?"

"Carroll! Doris!"

There was no mistaking the tone of the mother's voice. The baby, suddenly conscious of cold fingers and tingling toes, ran toward her with a whining cry, his short arms outstretched. The others followed slowly, exchanging mutinous glances.

"Carroll is always trying to make me an' Buddy mind him; but we won't," observed Doris, emphatically kicking her overshoes across the floor.

"All three of you should obey mother every time," chanted Elizabeth in the weary tone of an oft-repeated admonition. She sighed as she added, "It is very naughty to argue and dispute."

"But you see, mother, I'm the oldest," began Carroll argumentatively, "an' I generally

know what the children ought to do just as well as anybody."

He hung up his hat and coat and set his overshoes primly side by side with a rebuking glance at his small sister, who tossed her mane of hair at him disdainfully.

"I see you've forgotten what mother said about overshoes, Doris," he whispered with an air of superior merit which appeared to exasperate the little girl beyond endurance. She leaned forward suddenly and a piercing squeal from the boy announced the fact that virtue frequently reaps an unexpected reward.

"Doris pinched my ear hard, mother," he explained, winking fast to keep back the unmanly tears. "I didn't even touch her."

Elizabeth looked up from kissing and cuddling her baby. "Oh, Doris dear; how could you! Don't you love your little brother?"

The little girl flattened herself against the newel-post, her brown eyes full of warm, dancing lights. "Sometimes I do, mother," she said, with an air of engaging candour; "an' sometimes I feel jus'—like biting him!"

Elizabeth surveyed her daughter with large eyes of pained astonishment,

“You make mother very sorry when you say such naughty things, Doris,” she said, severely. “Hang up your coat and hood; then you must go up-stairs to your room and stay till I call you.”

In the half hour that followed Elizabeth gave her youngest his supper of bread and milk and hurried him off to bed, endeavouring in the meanwhile to keep a watchful eye upon the operations of the heavy-handed Celia, now irreproachable in a freshly starched cap and apron, and an attentive ear for Carroll practicing scales and exercises in the parlour. Later there was a salad to make, which involved the skilful compounding of a French dressing, and last of all a hurried freshening of her own toilet before the quick opening of the front door announced the advent of the head of the house.

Elizabeth was fastening her collar with fingers which trembled a little with the strain of her multiplied activities, when she heard her husband's voice upraised in joyous greetings to the children. “Hello there, Carroll, old man! And daddy's little girl, too!”

She had entirely forgotten Doris, and that

young person had quite evidently escaped from durance vile into the safe shelter of her father's arms. After all, it was a small matter, Elizabeth assured herself; and Sam disliked tears and unpleasantness during the hours, few and short, he could spend with the children. Promising herself that she would talk seriously with the small offender at bed-time she ran down stairs to receive her own greeting, none the less prized and longed for after ten years of married life.

Her husband's eyes met her own with a smile. "Betty—dear!" he whispered, passing his arm about her shoulders. Doris from the other side peered around at her mother, her bright eyes full of laughing triumph.

"If I'm not very much mistaken," her father said mysteriously, "there's something in my coat pocket for good children."

Doris instantly joined her brother in a race for the highly desirable pocket, and the two were presently engaged in an amicable division of the spoils.

"You mustn't eat any candy till after dinner, children," warned Elizabeth.

Doris had already set her sharp white teeth

in a bonbon, when her father's hand interposed. "Hold hard, there, youngsters," he said; "you heard the order of the court; no candy till after dinner."

"Just this one, daddy," pouted Doris. "I think I might." She swallowed it quickly and reached for another.

"Not till after dinner, young lady," and the pasteboard box was lifted high out of reach of small exploring fingers.

"Oh, Sam, why will you persist in bringing home candy?" Elizabeth asked, with a sort of tired indulgence in her voice. "You know they oughtn't to have it."

"I forgot, Betty. Please, ma'am, will you 'xcuse me, just this once—if I'll never do it again?"

His upraised hands and appealing eyes were irresistibly funny. Elizabeth laughed helplessly, and the children rolled on the floor in an ecstasy of mirth.

When presently all trooped out to dinner neither parent observed Doris as she nibbled a second bonbon.

"Oh-o-o! You naughty girl!" whispered Carroll enviously. "Where did you get that?"

"Out of the box," replied the small maiden, with a toss of her yellow head. "Um-m, it's good; don't you wish you had some?"

"Mother said——"

"Don't talk so loud; I'll give you half!"

"It's most all gone now. I'll tell mother, if you don't give me all the rest." And the boy reached masterfully for the coveted morsel.

"You're such a rude child you oughtn't to have any," observed Doris, nonchalantly bestowing the debatable dainty in her own mouth. "If you tell, I'll call you 'tattle-tale'!" she said thickly; "then the' won't either of us get any."

Carroll scowled fiercely at this undeniable statement. His father did not encourage unmanly reprisals.

"You're an awful selfish child, Doris," he said reproachfully, "an' that's worse 'an being rude; mother said so. It's worser 'an anything to be selfish. I wouldn't do it; guess I wouldn't!"

"I am not selfish!"

"You are, too!"

"*Chil—dren!*"

Their mother's vaguely admonitory voice

caused the belligerents to slip meekly enough into their respective seats. They were hungry, and the soup smelled good. But their eyes and explorative toes continued the skirmish in a spirited manner.

"I had a letter from Evelyn Tripp to-day," Elizabeth was saying, as she fastened the children's long linen bibs. "——Sit up straight in your chair, Doris, and stop wriggling."

Sam Brewster cast an admonitory eye upon his son. "Evelyn Tripp!" he echoed, "I haven't heard you mention the lady in a long time."

"You know they left Boston last year and I hardly ever see her now-a-days. Poor Evelyn!"

"It is too bad," he said with mock solicitude. "Now, if you hardly ever saw me it would be 'poor Sam,' I suppose."

"The Tripps lost most of their money," she went on, ignoring his frivolous comment; "then they moved to Dorchester."

He helped himself to more soup with a reminiscent smile. "Worse luck for Dorchester," he murmured.

"Why, Sam," she said reprovingly. "Of

course Evelyn was—Evelyn; but she was as kind as could be just after we were married, and before, too. Don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes; I remember perfectly. We were pawns on the chess-board in Miss Tripp's skilful hands for awhile," he agreed drily. "She's a Napoleon, a—er—Captain of Industry, a——"

"Please don't, Sam," interrupted Elizabeth. "Poor Evelyn has been very unfortunate, and I'm sorry for her. She—wants to come and make us a visit, and I——"

An appalling thump and a smothered squeal marked the spot where, at this crucial point in the conversation, Doris suddenly disappeared from view. Her father stooped to peer under the cloth.

"Will you kindly tell me what you were trying to do, Doris?" he demanded, as he fished his daughter out from under the table in a more or less dishevelled condition.

"It was Carroll's fault, daddy," replied the child. "He kicked me under the table, an' course I was 'bliged to kick him back; an' I did it!"

Her air of sparkling triumph provoked a

12 Those Brewster Children

smile from her father; but Elizabeth looked grave.

"I really think," she said, "that Doris ought to go upstairs without dessert. You know, Doris, you disobeyed mother when you came down without leave."

The little girl's eyes flashed angry fire. "Carroll kicked me first," she pouted, "an' I couldn't reach him; he wasn't fair 'cause he got 'way back in his chair on purpose; you know you did, Carroll Brewster!"

Elizabeth turned judicially to her son.

"No, mother," explained the boy, "I didn't really kick Doris; I just put out my toe and poked her,—just a small, soft poke; you know it didn't hurt, Doris; but I did squeeze back in my chair so you couldn't reach me." His candid blue eyes, so like his father's, looked full into hers.

"Well, in view of the evidence, I propose that you suspend sentence, Betty, and let them both off," put in the head of the house. "You'll be a good girl and keep your toes under your chair, won't you, Dorry?"

"Yes, daddy, I will," promised the little girl, gazing up at her father from under her curved

lashes with the dimpled sweetness of a youthful seraph. "I do love you so, daddy," she cooed gently. "I feel just like kissing you!"

Her father caught the child in his arms and pressed half a dozen kisses on her rosy cheeks before depositing her in her chair. "Remember, girly, you must be as quiet as a mouse or your mother will whisk you off to bed before you can say Jack Robinson." He cast a laughing glance across the table at his wife. "You see we all stand in proper awe of you, my dear!"

"Oh, Sam!" murmured Elizabeth reprovingly; but she laughed with the children.

II

WHEN the militant young Brewsters were at last safely bestowed in bed, Elizabeth sank into her low chair with an involuntary sigh of relief—or fatigue, she hardly knew which.

“Tired, dear?” asked her husband, glancing up from his paper. “I suppose you’ve put in a pretty hard day breaking in the foreigner. But you’re doing wonders. The dinner wasn’t half bad, and the mechanic didn’t break a single dish in the process; at least I didn’t hear the usual crash from the rear.”

She smiled back at him remotely. She did not think it worth while to report the scorched potatoes, or the broken platter belonging to her best set of dishes.

“I was thinking about Doris,” she said.

Her husband’s eyes lighted with a reminiscent smile. “Little monkey!” he exclaimed. “She slid down the banisters like a streak of lightning and flew into my arms before I had time to take off my overcoat. She said she was sitting on the stairs, waiting for me to come.

Not many children think enough about seeing their old daddy to sit on the stairs in the dark!"

"I'm really sorry to undeceive you, Sam; but I had sent that child up to her room, and told her to stay there till I called her!" Elizabeth informed him crisply.

"Wherefore the incarceration, O lady mother?"

"She was very naughty, Sam; she pinched Carroll, and when I reproved her for doing it, she said she felt like biting him. Think of that! Of course I had to do something."

"What had Carroll done to provoke the cannibalistic desire on the part of the young woman?" he wanted to know, with judicial calm.

"Nothing at all, except to remind Doris to hang up her coat and put her overshoes away, as I've told them both to do repeatedly."

His mouth twitched with an amused smile. "And Dorry punished him promptly for his display of superior virtue—eh? Well, it may be very much out of order for a mere father to say so, but I'll venture to express the opinion that it won't hurt Master Carroll to get

an occasional snubbing from somebody. He's a good deal of a prig, Betty, and it's got to come out of him some way or other between now and his Sophomore year in college. Better not interfere too often, my dear. Let 'em work it out; it won't hurt either of 'em."

His wife surveyed him with wide, sad eyes. "Oh, Sam!" she murmured, "how can you talk like that? Carroll tries to be a good boy and help me all he can. But Doris——"

"Don't you worry about the little girl," advised her husband, laying a soothing hand on hers. "She's all right."

"She ought not to quarrel with the other children; or disobey me. You know that, Sam."

"Of course not. You'll have to make her toe the mark, Betty."

"But how, Sam? I've tried. I'm positively worn out trying."

The man pursed up his lips in an inaudible whistle. "Upon my word, Betty," he broke out at length, "I don't know as I can tell you. We don't stand for whipping, you know. Beating small children always struck me as being a relic of the dark ages; and I know I could

never stand it to see a child of mine cower before me out of physical fear. But we mustn't spoil 'em!"

"Marian Stanford whips Robbie every time he disobeys," Elizabeth said after a lengthening pause. "She uses a butter-paddle—the kind I make those little round balls with; you know it has a corrugated surface. She says it is just the thing; it hurts so nicely. But I'm sure Robbie Stanford is far naughtier than Carroll ever thinks of being."

Her husband broke into a helpless laugh which he promptly repressed at sight of her indignant face.

"You oughtn't to laugh, Sam," she told him, in a tone of dignified reproof. "You may not think it very important—all this about the children; but it is. It is the most important thing in the world. Even Marian Stanford says——"

"Why do you discuss the subject with her?" interrupted Sam. "You'll never agree; and whatever we do with our own children, we mustn't force our views on other people."

She surveyed him with a mutinous expression about her pretty lips. "Marian doesn't

18 Those Brewster Children

hesitate to criticise my methods," she said. "The last time I saw her she informed me that she had whipped her baby—only think, Sam, her *baby!*"

"Did she use the butter-paddle on the unfortunate infant?" he wanted to know, with a quizzical lift of his eyebrows; "or was it a spanking *au naturel?*"

Elizabeth repressed his levity with a frown. "I wonder at you, Sam, for thinking there's anything funny about it," she said rebukingly. "I didn't feel at all like laughing when she said—with such a superior air—'Livingstone's been getting altogether too much for me lately, and this morning I took the paddle to him and whipped him soundly. He was the most surprised child you ever saw!' Of course I didn't *say* anything. What could I have said? But I must have looked what I felt, for she burst out laughing. 'Dear, dear!' she said, 'how indignant you do look; but I intend to have *my* children mind me.' Then she glanced at Richard peacefully pulling the spools out of my basket as if she pitied him for having such a fond, weak mother as to allow it."

Sam Brewster rumbled his hair with a smothered yawn. "Marian is certainly a strenuous lady," he murmured. "But let me advise you, Betty, not to discuss family discipline with her, if you wish to preserve peaceful relations between the families. The illegitimate use of the Stanford butter-paddle is nothing to us, you know.—Er—you were telling me about the letter you had from the fair Evelyn," he went on pacifically, "and did my ears deceive me? or did you intimate that our dear friend Miss Tripp was coming to spend the day with us soon?"

"To spend the day!" echoed Elizabeth. "She's coming to stay two weeks. I had to ask her, Sam," she added, quickly forestalling his dismayed protest; "she is obliged to be in town interviewing lawyers and people, and I did want to do something to help her. Sam, she thinks she may be obliged to teach, or do something; but she isn't up on anything, and I don't believe she could possibly get any sort of a position."

"Betty, you're a good little woman," he said, beaming humorously upon her; "and I never felt more convinced of the fact than I

do this minute. I'm game, though; I'll do everything I can to help in my small, weak way."

Elizabeth gazed at her husband with wide, meditative eyes. "I do wish," she said devoutly, "that Evelyn could meet some nice, suitable man. She's really very attractive—you know she is, Sam—and it would solve all her problems so beautifully."

"How would Hickey do?" he inquired lazily. "George is forty, if not fat and fair; and he's a thoroughly good fellow."

III

ELIZABETH BREWSTER had been awake in the night, as was her custom, making her noiseless rounds of the children's beds by the dim light of a candle. A cold wind had sprung up, with driving snow and sleet, and she feared its incursion into her nursery. Daylight found her in the kitchen superintending the slow movements of Celia, who upset the coffee-pot, dropped a soft-boiled egg on the hearth and stumbled over her untied shoe-strings in her untutored efforts to assist.

Close upon the hurried departure of her husband to his office in a distant part of the city, came the sound of small feet and voices from above. With Sam's kiss still warm on her lips she ran lightly upstairs. Carroll, partly dressed, stood before the mirror brushing his hair, in funny imitation of his father's careful manner of accomplishing that necessary process; while Doris scampered wildly about in her night-gown, her small bare feet pink with cold.

"I wanted to see my daddy," she pouted, as her mother remonstrated. "I wanted to tell him somesing."

"You can tell him to-night, girlie.—Yes, baby; in just a minute!" Elizabeth's fingers were flying as she pulled on the little girl's warm stockings and buttoned her shoes. "Now then, kittykins, slip into your warm dressing-gown and see how nicely you can brush your teeth, while mother—What is it, Carroll? Oh, a button off? Well, I'll sew it on. Give Buddy his picture-book.—Yes, pet; mother knows you're hungry; you shall have breakfast in just a minute. See the pretty pictures.—That's right, Carroll, my work-basket. Now stand still while I—Oh, Doris dear! Did you drop the glass?"

"It was all slippy, mother, an' I couldn't hold it. It's on the floor, mother, all in teeny, weeny pieces!"

"Don't step on them! Wait, I'll sweep up the pieces.—Yes, baby, mother hears you! See the pretty picture of the little pigs! Those nice little pigs aren't crying!—Wait, Carroll, till mother fastens the thread. There, that's done! Now put the basket—What is it, Doris?"

Oh, poor little girl; you've cut your finger. Don't cry! But you see you should have minded mother and not touched the broken glass. Now we'll tie it up in this nice soft cloth, and——

“Yes, Celia; what is it? Oh, the butcher? Well, let me think—We had beefsteak last night. Tell him to bring chops—nice ones; not like the last.—Oh, I must run down and speak to that boy; he's so careless with the orders! Tell him to wait a minute, Celia.—Carroll, won't you show baby his pictures and keep him quiet till I—No, Doris; you mustn't touch that bottle; that is father's bay-rum. Put it down, quick!”

The meddlesome little fingers let go the bottle with a jerk. It fell to the floor, its fragrant contents pouring over the carpet. “Oh, you naughty child! What will mother do with you? 'All of daddy's nice—Yes, Celia; I hear you. I am coming directly. I must wipe up this—He says he can't wait? Well, tell him to bring two pounds of nice lamb chops—rib chops. If they are like the last ones he brought tell him I shall send them right back.

“Now, Doris, I want you to look at mother.

Why did you climb up in that chair and pull the cork out of the bottle, when I've told you never to meddle with the things on the chiffonière?"

"I should think that child would know better after a while," put in Carroll, with the solemn air of an octogenarian grandfather. "You ought to have remembered the salad oil last week, Doris, and the ink the week before!"

"Don't interrupt, Carroll; I'm talking to Doris just now. Look at mother; don't hang your head."

"I wanted to—smell of it," muttered the child, digging her round chin into her neck, while she eyed her mother from under puckered brows. "Daddy said I might; lots of times he lets me smell it."

"Yes, when he holds the bottle; but now, you see, poor daddy won't have any nice bay-rum the next time he wants to shave. He'll say 'who spilled my bay-rum?'"

"It smells good!" observed Doris, filling the judicial pause with a rapturous giggle.

"But it will all evaporate before night," said Elizabeth, taking up her youngest, who had

thrown The Adventures of Seven Little Pigs on the floor and was protesting loudly at the delay.

"How do you spell evaporate, mother?" asked Carroll. "That's a funny word—e-vap-o-rate. What does it mean, mother?"

"It means to go away into the air—to disappear," Elizabeth told him. "See the big spot on the floor, and smell how fragrant the air is. Now we'll go down to breakfast and I will open the windows; when I come back after a while the bay-rum will be gone; it will be evaporated. Do you understand? Doris can't pick it up and put it back into the bottle, no matter how sorry she may feel to think she has been so careless."

Two widely opened pairs of serious eyes travelled from the lessening spot on the floor to her face.

"I think it would be nice to spill a bottle of 'fumery every day an' smell it 'vaporate,'" gurgled Doris, showing her dimples.

Elizabeth lifted the mischievous face toward hers with an admonitory finger-tip. "I'll tell you, Doris, what you must do to make it right with father," she said slowly and impressively.

"You must take all the money out of your bank and buy a new bottle of bay-rum."

She felt that for once, at least, she had made the punishment fit the crime to a nicety.

"Not all my money, mother?"

"It will take every cent of it, I am afraid."

The small culprit clapped her hands and executed an impromptu pirouette. "Oh, goody, goody, Carroll! mother says I may spend all my money; won't that be fun? When, mother, when can I buy the bottle for daddy? To-day? Say yes, mother; please say yes!"

Elizabeth buried her face in her baby's fat neck to conceal the rebellious smile that would curve her young lips, just when she knew she ought to be grave and severe.

"If you are a good girl in kindergarten I will take you to the store this afternoon," she said finally, with an undercurrent of wonder at the punishment which had so suddenly been metamorphosed into a reward. These singular transformations were apt to occur when her small daughter was concerned. She reflected upon the recurrence of the phenomenon as she brushed the silken mass of Doris' blond hair

and fastened up her frock in the back, both operations being impeded by the wriggings of the stalwart infant in her lap.

"I like to smell 'fumery," announced the young person, at the conclusion of her toilet, "an' I love—I jus' love to hear pennies jingle in my pocket. Can I empty the money out of my bank now, mother? Can I?" She swung backward and forward on her toes like a bird poised for flight.

"You must eat your breakfast and go to school," Elizabeth said, trying hard to keep her rising impatience out of her voice. "And after school——"

"After school can I take my bank? The very minute it's out? Can I, mother; can I?"

"You should say *may* I; not *can* I, Doris. Yes; if you're a good girl in kindergarten, and keep hold of Carroll's hand all the way going and coming, why then——"

"I don't like to take hold of hands with Carroll," objected Doris, drawing her lips into a scarlet bud. "I like to walk by my lone; but I promise I won't get run over or anything. I'll be just as good!"

It wasn't far to the little school where both

children spent the morning. Elizabeth watched her darlings quite to the corner, pleased to observe that they were clinging obediently to each other's hands and apparently engaged in amicable conversation.

Then her thoughts turned with some anxiety upon the approaching visit of Miss Tripp. She was very fond of Evelyn Tripp, she assured herself, and if it were not for Celia, and the spare-room (which needed new curtains, new paper and a larger rug to cover the worn place in the carpet), and if—she wrinkled her pretty forehead unbecomingly—the children could only be depended upon. One could not safely predict the conduct of Doris from hour to hour; and while, of course, Carroll was the best child in the world; still, even Carroll—upon occasions—could be very trying to the nerves. As for Richard, he was the baby; and no one, not even Evelyn Tripp, could fail to understand the subordinate position of the average household in its relations to the baby of the house. She kissed and hugged the small tyrant rapturously, while she set forth a plentitude of building-blocks, picture-books, trains, engines and wagons of miniature sizes and bril-

liant colours calculated to enchain the infant attention.

“Now, darling,” she cooed, “here are all your pretty playthings; sit right down and play, and be a good little man, while mother runs out in the kitchen a minute to see what Celia is doing.”

Richard surveyed his spread-out possessions with a distinctly bored expression on his round cherubic countenance. He had seen and handled those trains, wagons, engines and blocks many, many times before, and they did not appeal to his infant imagination with the same alluring force as did some other objects in the room. Had his mother seen fit to install the scarlet locomotive, for example, on the lofty mantle-piece with a stern interdiction upon it, it would doubtless have appeared supremely attractive. But the infant mind does not differ in essentials from that of the adult. The difficult, the forbidden, the almost unattainable fires the ambition and stiffens the will. There was a glass tank in the bay-window, situated on what appeared to Richard as a lofty and well-nigh inaccessible table. It contained a large quantity of water of a

greenish hue, as well as a number of swift-moving, glittering, golden things which flashed in and out between the green, waving plants rooted in the sand at the bottom.

Now Richard had been sternly forbidden to touch this enticing combination of objects. Nevertheless he had done it; not only once, but twice—thrice. He recalled with rapture the cool, slippery feel of the stones; the entrancing drip and gurgle of the water; the elusive, flitting shapes of the yellow things, “sishes,” he called them fondly, which an adroit hand could occasionally manage to seize and hold for a brief instant.

A stray sunbeam darted into the aquarium and lit up its mysterious depths with irresistible gorgeousness. Richard gazed and gazed; then he turned and kicked the red locomotive; under the impact of his pudgy foot it dashed with futile energy into the ruck of wagons, cars and building-blocks and lay there on its side, its feeble little wheels turning slowly.

“Nas’y ol’ twain!” muttered the infant disgustedly.

IV

MEANWHILE Elizabeth in her kitchen was busy unearthing divers culinary crimes in the various cupboards and closets where the stolid Celia displayed a positive ingenuity in concealing the evidences of her misdoings. It was not perhaps to be wondered at that the untutored Norwegian should elect to boil her dish-cloth with the embroidered doilies from the dining-room; or that the soap should be discovered in a state of gelatinous collapse in the bottom of the scrubbing pail and the new cereal cooker burning gaily on the range. But Elizabeth's strained patience finally snapped in twain at sight of a pile of parti-coloured bits of china in the bottom of the coal-hod.

"My best salad bowl!" she exclaimed, stooping to examine the grimy fragments. "When did you break it, Celia?"

The girl was standing at the sink, presenting her broad back like a solidly built wall against

32 Those Brewster Children

the rising tide of her mistress' indignation. Her big blond head sank forward over her dish-pan; a guttural murmur issued from her lips.

"And I have always been so careful of it! It was one of my wedding presents!" continued Elizabeth, in a fine crescendo. "How did you do it?"

The girl had turned on both faucets, and the descending torrent of rushing water drowned the anguished inquiry.

"You know I told you never to touch that bowl. I preferred to wash it myself. You must have taken it out of the dining-room. Why did you do it?"

"I no take heem out—naw! I smash heem when I move the side-brood." The girl's broad magenta-tinted face was turned suddenly upon her mistress. She appeared excessively pleased with her mastery of the difficult English tongue. "I scrub ze floor; I s-m-a-s-h heem," she repeated positively.

Elizabeth drew a deep breath. Scrubbing was Celia's one distinguished accomplishment. The spotless floors and table and the shining faucets and utensils bore evidence to the ear-

nestness of her purpose and the undeniable strength of her arms.

"You didn't mean to do it, I am sure," she said at last, with a renunciatory sigh; "but remember in future you must not move the dishes on the side-board unless I am there to help you."

"I no move heem; I s-m-a-s-h heem."

"Yes, I understand; but don't do it again."

"I no s-m-a-s-h heem 'gain—Naw!" The girl's china blue eyes gazed guilelessly into the depths of the coal-hod; she lifted them with a triumphant smile upon her mistress. "I *have*—s-m-ash!"

The trill of the door-bell put an end to this improving conversation; Elizabeth answered it herself by way of the sitting-room, where she paused to remove Richard, damp and dripping, from an ecstatic exploration of the gold-fish tank. The sound of his passionate protest followed her to the front door and lent a crisp decision to her tones as she informed a gentleman of an Hebraic cast of countenance that she did not wish to exchange old shoes of any description for "an elegant sauce-pan, lady; cost you one dollar in the store. Only

34 Those Brewster Children

one pair shoes, lady, this grand piece; cost you one dol——”

Elizabeth shut the door firmly upon the glittering temptation and returned to her youngest born, who was weeping large tears of wrath in the middle of the sitting-room floor.

“Come up stairs with mother, Richard; your sleeves are all wet,” exhorted his mother, struggling with a sudden temptation. It would have been a relief to her feelings to spank him soundly, and she acknowledged as much to herself.

“Come, dear,” she repeated, in a carefully controlled voice. But Richard’s fat legs doubled limply under him; he appeared unable to take a single step; whereupon his slender mother masterfully picked him up, despite the mysterious increase in his weight which she had had frequent occasion to notice in the person of an angry child.

It was useless at the present moment to remind her son of oft-repeated prohibitions concerning the gold-fish tank. Elizabeth pondered the question of an appropriate penalty with knit brows, while she washed and dressed

him in dry garments to the accompaniment of his doleful sobs.

"Now, Richard, you must stay in your crib till you can be a good boy and mind mother," was the somewhat vague sentence of the maternal court at the conclusion of the necessary rehabilitation, whereupon the infant howled anew as if under acute bodily torture.

As she turned to pick up the wet clothing a cheerful voice called her to the top of the stairs. "Shall I come up, dear? Your kitchen divinity admitted me and told me to walk right in."

"Oh,—Marian; I'll be right down. I've had to dress Dick over again, and everything's in confusion. Go in the sitting-room, please."

Elizabeth wanted time to collect herself before meeting the cool, amused eyes of Marian Stanford, whose ideas on the government of children were so wholly at variance with her own.

"When you are ready to be a good boy, Richard, you may call mother and I will come up and take you out of your crib," was her parting observation to the culprit.

"Oh, Elizabeth, dear; I'm afraid I inter-

rupted a little maternal seance," was Mrs. Stanford's greeting. "No? Well, I'm glad if I haven't. It does vex me so when someone chances to call just as I am having it out with one of the infants."

"Richard got his sleeves wet," explained Richard's mother, with what the other mentally termed "a really funny air of dignity."

Mrs. Stanford's uplifted eyebrows and a flitting glance in the direction of the gold-fish tank expressed her complete understanding of the matter.

"I remember you told me your child was fond of fishing," she murmured. "So like his dear father."

Elizabeth's tense mouth relaxed into a smile. The howls upstairs had ceased; but she was conscious of waiting for something, she hardly knew what, to follow.

"Do tell me what you do in a case like this?" pursued Mrs. Stanford guilefully. "You know I'm perfectly willing to abandon my crude attempts at training the infant mind the instant you, or anybody, can show me something more efficient than my beloved butter-paddle. I tell Jim the B. P. is my best friend these days.

It is absolutely the only thing that intimidates Robert in the slightest degree."

Elizabeth shrugged her shoulders. "*Intimidates?*" she repeated.

Mrs. Stanford laughed. "Yes; intimidates. My dear, that child is a terror! I'm at my wit's end with him half the time; and as for Livingstone, he's going to be worse; I can see that already."

Elizabeth hesitated while the warm colour dyed her cheeks. "You know what I think about terrifying children into obedience, Marian; and I know what you think. We really oughtn't to discuss it."

The fine scorn in her eyes suddenly gave place to a look of alarm at sound of an appalling thump on the floor above. She darted from the room and up the stairs to the accompaniment of roars of anguish.

Marian Stanford moved her handsome shoulders gently. "She must have put Richard in his crib and told him to stay there," was her entirely correct supposition. "Of course he didn't stay put."

Marian Stanford was a graduate of Wellesley, and her mind filled with fragments of im-

perfectly acquired science not infrequently chanced upon a suggestive sequence. She could not resist the temptation to share her present gleam of enlightenment with dear Elizabeth (who had never been to college) when she presently returned, bearing Richard in her arms. The child was still drawing convulsive, half-sobbing breaths, and a handkerchief wet with witch hazel was laid across his forehead.

"He fell out of his crib, poor darling!" explained Elizabeth.

"I suppose you had told him not to get out?"

Elizabeth eyed her friend speculatively over the top of her baby's curly head. It was useless to be offended with Marian; she never seemed to be aware of it.

"You were about to say something enlightening," she observed with delicate sarcasm. "You may as well out with it."

Mrs. Stanford smiled appreciatively. "You always were a clever creature, Elizabeth," she drawled; "but had it occurred to you that I would never have thought of thumping my child as the law of gravitation thumped yours

just now? You wouldn't punish a certain young person for disobeying because you are so anxious to spare him pain; but I should say he'd been punished pretty severely—corporal punishment at that!”

“The poor darling fell out of his crib, Marian, and hurt himself. Any child might do that.”

Marian Stanford got to her feet lazily. She was one of those women who manage to accomplish a great deal of work with the least possible apparent effort. All her movements were deliberate, even indolent. Elizabeth envied her sometimes in the midst of her own somewhat breathless exertions.

“I came over to get your pattern for Carroll's blouse,” she said; “not to discuss the government of children. But we seem to be at it, as usual. What I meant to convey was commonplace enough; if you had seen fit to settle the matter of the fish tank with a sound spanking, administered on the spot, Richard might not—mind I do not say would not—but he might not have acquired this particular thump at the hands of Mrs. Be-done-by-as-you-did. It just occurred to me, dear, and

you know I never could keep my thoughts to myself as I should."

Elizabeth arose, deposited her child on the couch and produced a roll of patterns from a drawer in her desk. "Here is the blouse, Marian," she said; "you'll need to cut it larger for Robbie; he is so broad in the shoulders. Be careful about the collar, though, or you'll get it too big around the neck."

Marian Stanford was weak when it came to sewing. Elizabeth felt herself again as she saw the puzzled look in her friend's face. "This is the neck-band," she explained, "and this is the collar. You must be careful not to stretch the cloth after you have cut it. But you know perfectly well, Marian, that we *never* shall think alike about the way to bring up children. I simply will not whip my children—no matter what they do! They are not animals to be tortured into submission."

Mrs. Stanford laughed good-humouredly. "I'm afraid mine are," she said. "But never mind, Betty; we won't quarrel over it; you're too sweetly useful, and frankly I can't afford to. If I get into a mess over this blouse I shall come over to be extricated."

Ten minutes later Elizabeth was surprised to hear her husband's rapid foot in the hall. She ran to meet him with an anxious face.

"Nothing's the matter, dear," he said at once; "that is to say, nothing alarming. I was over this way to see Biddle & Crofut and ran in to tell you that Miss Tripp telephoned to the office this morning to inform me that she'd been called into town a day earlier than she expected to come, and would I—could I get word to her dearest Elizabeth that she would be with her this afternoon."

Elizabeth drew a deep breath. "Well," she said resignedly; "Celia is sweeping the spare room, and I'm making some new curtains out of my old muslin dress; you'll be surprised to see how well they'll look, Sam. But I've only a rice pudding for dessert, and——"

"I might order some ice-cream," he suggested, "and some——er——"

A sudden suspicion assailed his Elizabeth; she gazed searchingly at her husband. "You haven't told me all," she said. "Don't overwhelm me by saying that Mrs. Tripp is coming too."

He met her inquiring eyes rather shame-

facedly. "To tell you the truth, Betty, Hickey chanced to be in the office at the time the Tripp lady telephoned, and I—er—recalled what you said last night; so I——"

"You *didn't* ask Mr. Hickey to dinner to-night, Sam?"

"Why not? Aside from any sentimental considerations George is good company; and he's very appreciative of a certain little homemaker I know, and of the dinners he's eaten here in the past."

"But it seems so—sudden!"

He roared with laughter. "'In your mind's eye, Horatio,'" he quoted, when he had recovered himself somewhat. "You must remember, my dear, that neither the Tripp lady nor Hickey are aware of your Machiavellian designs upon their future."

"Mr. Hickey wasn't a part of my *designs*, as you call them," she reminded him with spirit. "I merely said that I wished poor Evelyn could find some nice suitable man, and you said——"

"We certainly owe the lady a 'suitable' article of some sort or other," he observed, with a reminiscent twinkle in his blue eyes, "if it's

nothing more than a husband, and I'd like you to understand, Betty, that Hickey is my candidate."

She glanced at her watch with a little shriek of dismay. "We mustn't waste another minute talking," she said. "Evelyn will be here before I'm half ready for her."

V

AN unlooked for guest, involving new curtains for the guest-room, did not prevent Elizabeth from the conscientious discharge of her maternal duties. She resolved for once to play the stern part of Mrs. Be-done-by-as-you-did.

Richard was playing with his blocks with perfect equanimity, a large black and blue lump on his forehead marking his recent experience with the undeviating law of gravitation. He gave utterance to a little yelp of protest as his mother took him up in her lap with a firm hand.

“You know, Richard,” she said solemnly, “that mother has told you ever so many times that you must not put your hand into the aquarium where the pretty gold-fish live. Why didn’t you mind mother?”

There being a new link established in the chain of associations connected with the gold-fish, the infant put his fat hand to the lump on his forehead and gazed unwinkingly at his parent.

"I like to sp'ash water," he announced conclusively. "I like bafs."

Elizabeth reflected that in a rudimentary way her child was endeavouring to make clear his motives, and even to place them on a praiseworthy basis. A feeling of pride in the distinguished intelligence of her children swelled within her; she suppressed it as she went on with an impressive show of maternal authority.

"Yes, Richard; mother knows you like to take your bath; but we don't take baths with the gold-fish. Besides, you got your nice clean dress all wet, and made poor mother a great deal of trouble. Then, when mother told you to stay in your crib, you disobeyed again and got a dreadful bump."

The infant appeared to ponder these indubitable statements for a space. Then he broke into an ingratiating smile. "I was tomin' to tell mudzer I was a dood boy," he said earnestly. "Zen I bumped my head."

The violet depths of his eyes under their upturned lashes were altogether adorable; so was his pink mouth, half parted and curved exquisitely like the petals of a flower. Eliza-

beth's arms closed round her treasure; her lips brushed the warm rose of his cheeks.

"Darling!" she murmured, for the moment quite losing sight of the fact that she was engaged in the difficult task of moral suasion. Elizabeth was almost guiltily open to the appeal of infantile beauty as opposed to the stern demands of discipline. The sight of a dimple, appearing and disappearing in a soft cheek, the quiver of baby lips; the irresistible twinkle of dawning humour in baby eyes were enough to distract her mind from any number of infantile peccadillos, and it is to be feared that the exceedingly intelligent Brewster children had become aware of it.

"I am a dood boy," repeated Richard, with a bewitching glance at his parent. Then his chin quivered pathetically and he raised his hand to his head and peered out from under his pink palm. "I bumped my head on ze floor."

Elizabeth hardened her heart against these multiplied fascinations. "You disobeyed mother twice," she said sternly. "I shall have to do something to make you remember not to touch the gold-fish again."

She looked about her somewhat uncertainly as if in search of a suitable yet entirely safe idea. "I think," she said solemnly, "that I shall tie you to the arm of this big chair for —*ten minutes!*"

The corners of Richard's pink mouth suddenly drooped as this terrible sentence of the maternal court was pronounced.

"I am a dood boy, mudzer," he quavered. "I bumped my head on ze floor an' I cwied!"

Two dimpled arms were thrown about Elizabeth's neck and a curly head burrowed passionately into her bosom. "I love 'oo, mudzer; I am a dood boy!"

"I know you mean to be good, 'darling!" exclaimed Elizabeth, her heart melting within her; "but you do forget so often. Mother wants to help you to remember."

But the intelligent infant had given himself up to an unpremeditated luxury of grief, and Elizabeth found herself in the unexpected position of a suppliant consoler. She begged her child to stop crying; she kissed the black and blue spot on his forehead and soothed him with soft murmurs and gentle caresses, and when finally he had sobbed himself to sleep in

her arms, she bestowed the moist rosy little bundle on the couch, covering him warmly; then, with a parting pat and cuddle, sat down to her belated work on the spare-room curtains, feeling that she had been very severe indeed with her youngest child.

Richard was still rosily asleep and Elizabeth was hurriedly attaching the ruffles to one of the improvised curtains when Celia, with two buttons off her frock in the back and a broad streak of stove-blackening across her honest red face, announced "one nize lady."

Elizabeth sprang to her feet in sudden consternation at sight of the small square of white pasteboard with which Celia prefaced her announcement.

Mrs. J. Mortimer Van Duser was a distant relative of Samuel Brewster's, and it pleased her to be kind, in an imposing and majestic manner—entirely suited to her own imposing and majestic person—to his "little family," as she invariably termed it. Elizabeth had assured her husband on more than one occasion that she did not feel the least embarrassment in that august presence; but her heart still flew to her mouth at sight of the entirely

correct equipage from Beacon Street, and she always found herself drawing a long breath of unconfessed relief when it rolled away after one of Mrs. Van Duser's infrequent visits.

When presently Mrs. Van Duser, large, bland and encased in broadcloth and sables, entered, she bestowed a gracious kiss upon Elizabeth's cheek, and seated herself in a straight-backed chair with the effect of a magistrate about to administer justice.

"I trust you received the little brochure I mailed you last week," was her initial remark, accompanied by a searching glance at Elizabeth's agitated face. "I refer to 'Anthropological investigations on one thousand children, white and coloured.' I looked it over most carefully and marked the passages I deemed particularly helpful and suggestive."

"Thank you, Mrs. Van Duser," faltered Elizabeth, "I did get the book, and I—was intending to write to you to-day to thank you for it."

"Have you read it?" inquired Mrs. Van Duser pointedly.

"I—looked it over, and—it appeared very——"

Mrs. Van Duser's steadfast gaze appeared to demand the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Elizabeth's eyes fell before it. "It was very good of you to—to think of me," she said.

"I think of you not infrequently," was the lady's gracious rejoinder, "and more particularly of your children, who are, of course, distantly related to myself. I cannot urge too strongly, or too often, the need of a scientific study of infancy and childhood as causally related to the proper functional development of your offspring."

"I am sure it is most kind of you," murmured Elizabeth, striving to kindle an appreciative glow. "But—I have so little time."

"You have all the time there is, my dear Elizabeth," chanted Mrs. Van Duser, in her justly celebrated platform tone; "and you should strive above all things to distinguish what is significant and essential from what is trivial and accidental." Her voice sank to a heart-searching contralto, as she added, "I have observed that you have time to sew trimming on your child's frock. What is trim-

ming as compared with the demands of the springing intellect?"

Elizabeth blushed guiltily and murmured something unintelligible.

"Did you study the passages marked in 'Nascent Stages and their Significance,' which I sent you the week before?—particularly those on 'The feelings and their expression'?" asked Mrs. Van Duser, after a weighty pause.

Elizabeth drew a deep breath. "I—found it not altogether easy to understand," she said guilefully.

"For an untrained mind—no," agreed Mrs. Van Duser blandly. "I feared as much, and I have come this morning because I wished to go over with you somewhat exhaustively the points mentioned by the author, in order to compare them with your own more practical experience. I am about to present a paper before the Ontological Club on 'The Emotive States as factors in the education of The Child,' which I feel sure should prove invaluable to all thoughtful parents. I had intended," she added, with a mordant emphasis on the past tense of the verb, "to dedicate the brochure to you upon publication."

At this point in the conversation, and before Elizabeth had time to express her blended contrition, gratitude and appreciation, two hurriedly slammed doors and the clatter of small feet in the passage announced the return of the children from school.

Mrs. Van Duser's severe expression relaxed perceptibly. "How very fortunate," she observed. "I was hoping for an opportunity of studying certain phenomena at first hand. You know, my dear, I so seldom see children."

Elizabeth's tender heart was touched by the unconscious wistfulness in the older woman's eyes. But she sighed at sight of the gilt-edged memorandum book in the hands of her guest. She was familiar with the exhaustive methods employed by Mrs. Van Duser in the pursuit of knowledge.

"You will not, I hope, interrupt any normal procedure," that lady was saying in a sprightly tone, calculated to restore the depressed spirits of the younger matron to their usual level. "I should like—if I may—to observe the children at their luncheon, since the sense stimuli connected with the taking of food is exceed-

ingly instructive as related to the cosmic consciousness."

"I shall be very happy to have you lunch with us," faltered Elizabeth, her thoughts busying themselves with a futile review of the contents of her larder. Then the door flew open and Carroll and Doris dashed in, breathless and eager, to precipitate their small persons upon their mother's lap.

"I was a *nawful* good girl in kindergarten, mother!" announced Doris, dancing with impatience, "an' I didn't get run over, or anythin'. When can I go to the store an' spend all my money, mother? *When?* Can I go *now?*"

"Doris, dear; don't you see Mrs. Van Duser? and Carroll——"

But the boy had already advanced politely, and was standing before the magisterial presence with a funny little air of resignation to the inevitable which forced a smile to his mother's serious lips.

"Can you tell me, my boy, why you experience pleasure at the sight of your mother?" demanded Mrs. Van Duser, gazing searchingly

at the child through her gold-mounted lorgnettes.

"I—like my mother, better'n any body else," replied the boy, with a worried pucker of his smooth forehead.

"*Like?*" echoed his inquisitor, looking up from a hurriedly pencilled note. "And what, pray, do you mean by 'like'?"

"I mean I—love her, because she's the best person I know."

"Is it because she gives you food when you are hungry that you love your parent? Or can you give me another reason?" continued Mrs. Van Duser, ignoring the comprehensive statement advanced by the boy.

Carroll glanced doubtfully after his mother, as she hastily withdrew to look after the luncheon table.

"I—don't know," he stammered. "I guess I like her when I'm hungry just the same."

"C., aged eight years, unable to enumerate reasons for fondness of parent," wrote Mrs. Van Duser, with every appearance of satisfaction. "The reasoning faculties apparently dormant at this age."

"What are you most afraid of?" was her

next question, accompanied by an ingratiating smile, calculated to disarm youthful timidity.

At this moment Richard, who had been peacefully asleep on the sofa, awoke, and becoming slowly aware of the majestic presence at his side, set up a doleful cry.

Whereupon Mrs. Van Duser noted neatly that "an unexpected visual impression evidently caused anxiety, without any assignable reason, in the normal infant R."

And when the normal infant scrambled down from the couch and retreated kitchenward under the careful supervision of his older brother, she observed further that "the dawning of the paternal instinct of protection was observable in the child C."

VI

THE conduct of the children at the luncheon table was marked by such unexampled propriety of manner that Mrs. Van Duser was visibly disappointed. She could hardly have been expected to know that Elizabeth had resorted to shameless bribery in advance of the meal with a shining coin in each small pocket, "to be spent exactly as you choose," and that Richard was taking his food in the kitchen under the lax supervision of the Norwegian maid. Still the occasion was not wholly barren of material for a trained psychologist, as Mrs. Van Duser was pleased to term herself.

"The psychophysical processes," she observed learnedly, "should be closely observed by the wise guardian, in order to properly graft desired complications on native reactions."

"I am afraid I do not altogether understand," murmured Elizabeth, secretly grateful that her guest's preoccupation of mind ren-

dered her oblivious to the blunders of Celia, as she plodded heavily about the table. "But I should like to ask you, Mrs. Van Duser, if you approve of—whipping children?"

Mrs. Van Duser dropped her pencil and focussed her piercing regard upon the wife of her distant relative.

"Decidedly not, my dear Elizabeth," she enunciated in her deepest contralto. "Corporal punishment brutalises the child by implying that a rational being is, or may be, on the level of the animal. It can be only too evident that if one treats a child like an animal, it will behave like an animal. I will send you an excellent pamphlet on the subject, which you will do well to study. In the meantime you should remember——"

Mrs. Van Duser stopped short, raised her lorgnette and stared hard at Doris. That young person had suddenly left her chair and was whispering in her mother's ear, in the peculiar, sibilant whisper of an eager child.

"I'm through of my dinner, mother," was wafted distinctly to the attentive ears of the guest. "An' I want to go an' buy daddy's 'fumery this minute. You said I might,

mother; you said I might.—Yes; but *when* is she going home, mother? *when?* ”

Far from evincing displeasure the great lady displayed the sincerest gratification. “A most interesting example of ideation,” she observed. “My dear Elizabeth, please explain the child’s emotions, if you are aware of them. I fail to observe anger or dislike, or even—as might well be expected—awe. Why do you wish me to go home?” she inquired directly of Doris, who had retreated behind her mother’s chair in pouting dismay.

Elizabeth experienced a hysterical desire to laugh; but she instantly repressed it. “You should explain to Mrs. Van Duser, Doris, that you spilled father’s bay-rum this morning, and that mother said you must buy him a fresh bottle with your own money,” she said soberly.

“I want to go *now*,” whispered the child. “You said I might, mother; you *promised!* ”

“Excellent!” exclaimed Mrs. Van Duser, writing rapidly in her book. “You really ought, my dear Elizabeth, to preserve a careful memoranda of these interesting mental movements of your offspring,” she observed convincingly. “Every properly constructed

parent should endeavour to so assist science. However crudely and unscientifically expressed, such records would prove of incalculable value to the student."

She turned to Doris with a complete change of manner. It was no longer the ontological Mrs. Van Duser, but the great lady from Beacon Street who spoke. "You have been very rude indeed, my child," she said sternly; "and little girls should never be rude; but I will take you with me in the carriage to purchase the toilet article referred to, and send you home afterwards, if your mother will permit."

As Elizabeth watched the flushed and triumphant Doris, departing in state in the Van Duser carriage, the jingling contents of her bank in her small pocket, she was conscious of a bewildering sense of failure. She had sincerely tried to impress a lesson of obedience and a respect for the rights of others upon the mind of her child, and, lo! the culprit was enjoying a long-wished-for treat!

The arrival of Miss Evelyn Tripp, in a hansom cab with a small much-belabelled trunk on top, successfully diverted her mind from this

and other ethical problems. Miss Tripp's recent misfortunes had as yet left no traces on her slight, elegant personality. She entered quite in her old fashion, amid a subdued rustle of soft silken garments, a flutter of plumes and a gracious odour of violets.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, clasping and kissing Elizabeth, quite in the latest mode. "How well you are looking! Indeed, you are younger and far, far prettier than the day you were married! How vividly I remember that day, and I am sure you do! How I did work to have everything pass off as it should, and so many persons have told me since that it was really the sweetest wedding they ever saw! It hardly seems possible that it was so long ago. What! You don't tell me that great boy is Carroll! Come here and let Aunt Evelyn kiss you, dear. And Doris? She was such a dear, tiny thing when I saw her last. Oh, that is the baby; you say! No; Elizabeth—not that great child! Fancy! I declare I feel like a Methuselah when I look at my friend's children. I hate to grow old—really old; don't you know."

Miss Tripp paused to remove her plumed hat,

while Elizabeth hastened to assure her friend that she really hadn't changed in the least. This was quite true, since Miss Tripp was of that somewhat thin and colourless type of American womanhood upon which the passing years appear to leave little trace.

"Oh, my dear!" sighed Miss Tripp, "I am changed; everything has changed with me, I assure you. Mother and I are obliged to live off air, exactly like wee little church mice. And I am simply worn to a fringe trying to economise and manage. I never was extravagant; you know that, dear, but now——. Well; I don't know what will become of us unless something happens."

"Something will happen, dear," said Elizabeth, more than ever warm-heartedly determined to make her friend as happy as herself. "Now I'm going to leave you to lie down and rest a little before dinner," she added guilefully, as she bethought herself of the various culinary operations already in progress under the unthinking control of Celia. "A friend of Sam's—a Mr. Hickey, chances to be dining here to-night; I hope you won't mind, dear. It—just happened so."

Miss Tripp turned to gaze searchingly at her friend. "You can't mean George Hickey—a civil engineer?" she asked.

"Why, yes; do you know him?"

"My dear; it's the oddest thing; but lately I seem to meet that man wherever I go. He is a friend of the Gerald Doolittles in Dorchester—you know who I mean—and spends a Sunday there occasionally; and when I was visiting Leticia Marston last fall, lo and behold! Mr. Hickey turned up there for the week end! I used to know him years ago when we were both children."

"Sam is associated with Mr. Hickey in a professional way," observed Elizabeth, with a careful indifference of manner. "He dines with us once in a while." She paused to listen, with her head on one side, while a look of alarm stole over her attentive face.

"What's the matter, dear?" inquired the unaccustomed Miss Tripp. "Do you hear anything?"

"No, Evelyn; I don't, and the silence is suspicious. I think I'll run down stairs and see what the boys are doing. Try and rest, dear, till I call you." And Elizabeth accomplished

a hasty exit by way of the back stairs and the kitchen, where she was in time to frustrate the intelligent Celia as she was about putting the French peas over to boil an hour before dinner time. From thence she sought the sitting-room, where she had left her two sons amicably engaged in constructing a tall and wobbly tower out of building blocks. Carroll had vanished, and her amazed and indignant eyes lighted upon the person of her youngest son kneeling in a chair before the forbidden aquarium, over which he leaned in a state of rapturous oblivion of past experiences, his plump hands buried in the sand at the bottom of the tank, while the alarmed gold fish flashed in and out between the dripping sleeves of his freshly-ironed blouse.

"Richard Brewster!" she cried. Then wrath and a disheartening sense of the futility of unassisted moral suasion quite swept her off her feet. She seized the child and laying him across her lap in time-honoured fashion, handed down from a remote ancestry, spanked him with a speed and thoroughness not to be surpassed by Grandmother Carroll in her most energetic mood.

VII

ELIZABETH was fluttering anxiously about the table in her small dining-room when her husband entered in his usual breezy fashion and laid a bunch of fragrant carnations before her.

"A finishing touch for your table, Betty," he said; and added with lover-like enthusiasm, "My! how pretty you're looking to-night!"

"I shouldn't think I'd look pretty after the day I've put in," she told him as she arranged the flowers in water. "Sam, Mrs. Van Duser was here to luncheon."

"No?"

"She came to ask me if I had read 'Anthropological Investigations on one thousand children, white and colored,' and I hadn't even looked at it."

"So you flatly flunked the exam; poor Betty!"

"Not exactly, Sam; I—told her I didn't quite—understand the subject."

"Ah, Machiavellian Betty! Did she tumble?"

"Oh, Sam! what a way to speak of Mrs.

Van Duser. I was the one to tumble, as you call it. She graciously picked me up. Of course Doris was naughty, and Celia spilled cocoa on the table-cloth and passed everything on the wrong side. Then after Mrs. Van Duser went, Evelyn came.—She's up-stairs now, dressing for dinner. And—after that—I don't know what you'll think of me, Sam; but I—was nervous or something I think, and I—whipped Richard.”

“You—what?”

“After all I've said about Marian Stanford, too! I just hate myself for doing it. But I had dressed that child twice all clean, and when I came down to see about dinner and found him playing in the aquarium *again*, Sam, dripping water all over the floor, and with his clothes soaked to the skin, I just seemed to lose all control of myself. I snatched the poor darling up and—and—spanked him as hard as I could. The strange part of it is that I—seemed to enjoy doing it.”

Her doleful air of abject contrition was too much for Sam. He roared with irrepressible laughter. “Forgive me, Betty,” he entreated; “but really, you know——”

"I understand now exactly why people whip their children," went on Elizabeth, descending into abysmal depths of humility and groveling there with visible satisfaction. "I gave way to uncontrollable rage just because I knew I must take the trouble to dress the poor little darling again, and I couldn't think for the minute what flannels to put on him. So I revenged myself, in just a common, spiteful, vulgar way. No, Sam; you needn't try to make light of what I did. Nothing can excuse it!"

At that instant the misused infant, dragging a train of iron cars behind him, hove into view.

"Chu-chu-chu!" he droned. "Det out the way! Here tomes the 'spress train!" His cherubic countenance was serene and rosy; he beamed impartially upon his parents as he scuffed across the floor.

"Well," said his father, endeavouring (unsuccessfully) to view the matter in a serious light, "I fail to observe any signs of violent abuse or tokens of abject fear about the young person; I guess you didn't——"

"Hush, Sam! I hope he's forgotten it—the darling! Do you love mother, baby?"

"I'm a dreat big engine-man!" vociferated the infant, submitting cheerfully to his mother's kisses, "an' I love 'oo more'n a sou-sand million! Chu-chu! Toot-toot! Ding-dong!"

"How about the other young Brewsters?" inquired their father, with a twinkle of mock solicitude in his blue eyes. "Have they been pursuing the undeviating paths of rectitude, or have you—er—been moved to——"

"Sam, if you make fun of me about—what I did to Richard, I——" her voice broke, and she hid her eyes on his shoulder. "I thought," she said, "that it was my duty to tell you."

"I'm not making fun of you, little woman. Perish the thought!" and he kissed her convincingly. "I don't know what I should—or shouldn't do—if I had to cope with the young miscreants single-handed all day. Where is Doris, by the way?"

She told him about the broken bay-rum bottle, and described the scene at the luncheon table. "I was so ashamed," she concluded; "but what could I do?"

"Let me laugh again, Betty!" he begged.

"That's too much, you know. Fancy our small Doris having the—er—audacity to stand up and audibly hint that Mrs. J. Mortimer Van Duser's room would be more acceptable than her company. I wish I'd been there to see and hear."

"Mrs. Van Duser said that it was a most interesting example of ideation—whatever that is," said his Elizabeth rather proudly. "She's writing a paper for the Ontological Club, and she's going to put all three of the children in."

"As what—Concrete examples of the genus *enfant terrible*?" he inquired cautiously.

Elizabeth was surveying her table with satisfied eyes. She did not appear to have heard his question.

"It may be hard work to take care of all that silver and glass we had for wedding presents, Sam," she said thoughtfully; "but on occasions it is useful."

"Yes; if the foreigner in the kitchen didn't too often turn our dancing into mourning by smashing it."

"I'm not going to let Celia wash one of these dishes," she told him firmly.

"Who is going to wash them?" he asked resignedly.

"I am—after Mr. Hickey's gone and Evelyn's in bed."

"That means me," he quoted irreverently. "I'm a thoroughly house-broken husband, and you can depend upon me, Betty, every shot."

She flashed him a grateful smile. "Of course I know that, Sam," was all she said; but her eyes were eloquent of love and happy trust. "What do you think, Sam," she added irrelevantly; "Evelyn has known Mr. Hickey a long time already."

"So much the better for Hickey!"

"Yes; that's what I thought. You see, Sam, if—if anything should happen, it wouldn't be all our doing; and so in a way, Sam, I actually felt relieved when Evelyn said that she had met Mr. Hickey before. It is really an awful responsibility."

"What? to ask Hickey to dinner? He didn't seem to mind it."

"Don't be flippant, Sam," she said with dignity. "You know perfectly well what I mean. If Mr. Hickey *should* fall in love with Evelyn—and I will say that she never looked more

attractive than she does now—and if she should——”

He interrupted her with a hasty kiss. “I’ve got to go up and dress,” he reminded her. “Don’t you worry, Betty; if he should, and she should, then they both would; and all you and I would be required to do would be to buy them a clock that wouldn’t go, or a dozen *pâté de foies gras* implements—only let it be something useful. By the way, I see you’ve set the table for the children. Do you think that is—er—exactly the part of wisdom?”

“No, Sam; I do not. But I had to make it up to Richard somehow, so I promised to let him have dinner with us, and Evelyn quite insisted upon the others. She thinks Carroll simply perfect, and she says Doris is the most fascinating child she ever saw.”

“Well,” he acquiesced, “they’re the biggest and best half of the Brewster family, when you come to think of it, and Hickey always wants to see them when he comes.”

Half an hour later Elizabeth was putting the finishing touches to her toilet, while the children, immaculate and shining, hovered admiringly about the dressing-table.

"Now remember, Carroll, you mustn't get to quarrelling with Doris about anything."

"I won't, mother; I promise."

"We're going to have ice-cream for dessert, and——"

"Oh-e-e!" in a rapturous chorus from all the children.

"I don't want you to make that noise when Celia brings it in to the table; that's why I'm telling you beforehand."

Richard was pirouetting heavily on his little stubbed shoes. "Oh-e-e!" he repeated, "ice-cream!"

"Now, do you think you can remember?" asked Elizabeth, clasping a string of gold beads about her pretty throat, and turning to meet the three pairs of upturned eyes. "I want Auntie Evelyn to think you've improved a great deal since the last time she was here. You weren't very good that time."

Carroll's clear gaze met his mother's reprov-ingly. "Do you want Auntie Evelyn to think we've improved, if we haven't?" he asked. "Because we're really getting badder most every day."

"You're badder, you mean," said Doris, with

a superior and pitying smile; "I'm as good 's I can be. Mrs. Van Duser said I was a very inter-est-in' 'zample of a child. So there!"

Carroll shook his head. "I'm not going to quarrel with you, Doris, 'cause I promised mother I wouldn't," he said with dignity; "but we are badder—'specially you; you didn't mind mother three times to-day."

"I am not badder."

"I said I wouldn't quarrel, Doris; but you are—very much badder."

"Hush, children!" exclaimed Elizabeth, hurriedly intervening between the militant pair. "Come right down stairs, and don't talk to each other at all unless you can be pleasant and polite."

Miss Evelyn Tripp presently appeared in a wonderful toilet, all lace and twinkling jets. She exclaimed over Carroll's marvellous gain in inches, and Doris' brilliant colour, and kissed and cooed over Richard.

"They're certainly the dearest children in the world," she said. "I've been simply wild to see them all these months, and you, too, Betty dear! I've so much to tell you!"

She twined her arm caressingly about Doris,

and smiled brilliantly down at the little girl, who gazed with round appreciative eyes at the visitor's gown and at the jewels which sparkled on her small white hands.

"Both of my front teeth are all wiggly," whispered the child, feeling that something out of the ordinary was demanded of her in a social way. "I can wiggle them with my tongue."

"Can you, darling? How remarkable! Never mind; you'll soon have some nice new ones that won't wiggle."

Doris giggled rapturously. "We're going to have ice-cream for dinner," was her next confidence. "But I'm not going to act s'prised when Celia brings it in. We've all promised mother we won't, even if it's pink. I hope it'll be pink; don't you?"

"Doris," warned her mother, "you're talking too much."

"Oh, do let the dear little soul say anything she likes to me, Betty!" protested Miss Tripp. "If you knew how I enjoyed it!"

Doris nestled closer to the visitor, eyeing her mother with the naughtily demure expression of a kitten stealing cream. "I was going to

tell you something funny," she said, "but I can't think what it was. I guess I'll remember when we're eating dinner."

"The artless prattle of a child is so refreshing, you know," continued Miss Tripp, "after all the empty conventionalities of society. I simply love to hear the little darlings—especially yours, dear Betty. You are bringing them up so beautifully!"

VIII

WHEN Mr. George Hickey rang the bell at the door of the modest Brewster residence that night, it was with the pleasant anticipation of a simple, but well-cooked dinner, of the sort a bachelor, condemned by his solitary estate to prolonged residence in that semi-public caravansary known as the American boarding-house, seldom enjoys.

He was very far indeed from a knowledge of the fact that he was in the oft-quoted position of the man in a boat on the hither side of the great rapids of Niagara. Mr. Hickey had allowed himself to be drawn into feeling a somewhat uncommon interest in Miss Evelyn Tripp, it is true; but he attributed this feeling wholly to the fact that he had known Miss Tripp when he was a tall, awkward boy of twenty and she was a rosy, fascinating miss of sixteen. She had laughed at him slyly in those days, and he had resented her mirth with

all the secret and hence futile agony which marks the intercourse of the awkward youth with the self-possessed maid. But the scar which Evelyn's youthful laughter had left in his bosom had remained unwontedly tender—as an old wound sometimes will; and when after the lapse of years they had met once more Mr. Hickey found the lady so surprisingly sweet, so gentle, so altogether tactful and sympathetic, that he could hardly escape a pleasant and soothing sense of gratitude. They spoke of old times—very old times they were; the mere mention of which brought a delicate blush to Miss Tripp's cheek. And the auroral light of youth, which never appears so roseate as when it shines upon the cold peaks of middle life, irradiated their common past and appeared to linger fascinatingly over Miss Tripp's somewhat faded person.

It had not, however, occurred to Mr. Hickey that the foregoing had any bearing whatever upon his own immediate future, nor upon the immediate future of Miss Evelyn Tripp. In a word, Mr. Hickey was very far from contemplating matrimony when he entered the

Brewster's cheerful little parlour, bearing a box of bonbons for its mistress, and a jumping-jack capable of singular and varied contortions, for the young Brewsters.

Miss Tripp appeared very much surprised to meet Mr. Hickey again; she gave him a beautiful little hand of welcome from the deep chair where she was enthroned with Richard upon her knee ruthlessly crumpling the skirt of one of her carefully cherished gowns.

"I'm telling the children a fairy story," she said archly; "you mustn't interrupt."

"May I listen, if I'm a good boy?" asked Mr. Hickey, endeavouring to assume a light and festive society air, which hardly comported with his tall spare figure and the air of sober professionalism which he had acquired during a somewhat stern and strenuous past.

Carroll, who guarded Miss Tripp's chair on the right, exchanged puzzled glances with Doris who occupied the left. The little girl giggled.

"You are n't a boy," she said, addressing Mr. Hickey with a confidence inspired by past acquaintanceship; "you're all grown up."

"I like fairy stories, anyway," he asserted

untruthfully; "and I want to hear the one Miss Tripp is telling. You'll let me; won't you, Doris?"

"I'll let you, if Aunty Evelyn'll let you; but I guess she won't."

Miss Tripp laughed musically. "What a quaint little dear it is," she murmured, kissing the child's pink cheek. "Why shouldn't Aunty Evelyn let Mr. Hickey hear the story if he wants to, dear?"

"He's too old," said Doris convincingly. "He wouldn't care about Cinderella losing off her glass slipper."

"Oh-e-e, Doris Brewster!" exclaimed Carroll, swelling with the superior enlightenment of his three years of seniority. "That's very rude indeed! Mr. Hickey doesn't look so very old. He's got quite a lot of hair left on the sides of his head, and——"

"Thanks, my boy," interrupted Mr. Hickey hastily. "But don't entirely floor me by enumerating all my youthful charms. How about that slipper of Cinderella's, Miss Tripp; there's a prince in that story, isn't there? with—er—plenty of hair on top of his head?"

Miss Tripp, who was actually blushing pink,

quite in her old girlish fashion, exchanged mirthful glances with the engineer.

"I was just coming to the prince," she said. "He was—oh, such a beautiful prince, all dressed in pale blue, embroidered with pearls and silver, and on his breast a great flashing diamond star. And when he saw Cinderella, standing all by herself, in her beautiful gauzy ball-dress——"

"An' her glass slippers!" gurgled Doris rapturously.

"An' her gwass sippers!" echoed Richard, hugging the story-teller in a sudden spasm of affection.

"Yes, her glass slippers, of course, darlings," cooed Miss Tripp; "but the prince did not notice the slippers, he was so agitated by the sight of her lovely face and her shining golden hair."

Mr. Hickey caught himself gazing dreamily at Miss Tripp's elaborately arranged coiffure. The yellow gas light fell becomingly upon the abundant light brown waves and coils, touching them into a shimmering gold which he did not remember to have noticed before. How well she was telling the story, too; and how

fond of her the Brewster children appeared to be. He recalled mistily that someone had said, or written—perhaps it was one of those old author chaps—that it was impossible to deceive a child. Mr. Hickey was convinced that this must be true. And insensibly he fell to thinking how pleasant it would be if this were his own fire-side, and if the lady in the deep wicker chair were——.

A sound of small hand-clapping brought him out of this blissful revery with a start. “I like that part best of all,” Carroll was saying; “an’ if I’d been that prince I’d ’av taken my big, shining sword and cut off the heads of those bad, wicked sisters! Yes; I would; I’d like to do it!” And the sanguinary small boy swaggered up and down, his shoulders squared and his eyes shining.

“Oh, my dear!” protested Miss Tripp mildly. “You wouldn’t be so unkind; I’m sure you wouldn’t.”

“I’d take all their pretty dresses away an’ wear ’em myself,” shrilled Doris excitedly. “An’ I’d—pinch ’em; I’d——”

“Let me tell you what dear, sweet Cinderella did,” interrupted Miss Tripp, tactfully seizing

the opportunity to impress a moral lesson. "She forgave her unkind step-mother and her two rude, spiteful sisters, and gave them each a castle and many, many lovely gowns and jewels; and after that they loved Cinderella dearly—they couldn't help it. And all of them were good and happy for ever afterward."

The children stared in round-eyed displeasures at this ethical but entirely tame denouement.

"That isn't in my story-book," said Carroll positively. "Cinderella married the Prince, an' the fairy god-mother turned the bad sisters into rats, an' made 'em draw her carriage for ever an' ever."

"Why, Carroll Brewster! I guess you made that up!" cried Doris. "The fairy god-mother didn't turn the bad sisters into anything; she jus' waved her wand an' turned Cinderella's ol' ragged clo'es into a lovely spangled weddin' dress, an' then——"

"She turned 'em into rats," repeated Carroll doggedly. "An' I'm glad she did it."

"She did not turn 'em into rats!"

"She did!"

"She didn't!"

At this crucial moment entered Elizabeth, flushed and bright-eyed from a final encounter with the elemental forces in the kitchen. "Won't you all come out to dinner," she said prettily; "I'm sure you must have concluded that dining was among the lost arts by this time."

"Not in this house," said Mr. Hickey gallantly. "This is one of the few—the very few places where one has the inestimable privilege of really dining. The balance of the time I merely take food from a strict sense of duty."

"We're going to have ice-cream," whispered Carroll kindly.

His father, who had caught the whisper, laughed outright. "He wants to give you something to look forward to, George," he said, as he tried the edge of his carving-knife. "If variety is the spice of life anticipation might be said to be its sweetening—eh? Will you have your beef rare or well-done, Miss Tripp?"

"Well-done, if you please," murmured Miss Tripp, smiling happily as she squeezed Doris' chubby hand under the table-cloth.

The little girl's eyes were very bright as she

said, "I like to have you a-visitin', Auntie Evelyn."

"Do you, dear? Well Auntie Evelyn is very, very happy to be here."

"We were going to have rice-pudding for dessert if you hadn't come. I don't like rice-pudding; do you, Auntie Evelyn?"

"Doris—dear!"

Her mother's voice held reproof and warning; but the child with the specious sense of security inspired by the presence of strangers displayed her dimples demurely. "I didn't know it was naughty not to like rice-pudding," she said, in a small distinct voice.

Mr. Hickey glanced thoughtfully across the table at Miss Tripp, who was smiling down at the little girl encouragingly. "Most of us are naughty when it comes to hankering after the unusual and the unattainable," he observed didactically. "I eat my rice-pudding contentedly enough most days of the year; but on the three hundred and sixty-fifth I——"

"You pine for pink ice-cream; don't you?" smiled Miss Tripp; "but one might tire of even the pinkest ice-cream, if it appeared too often. What one really wants is—plain

bread." She cast a barely perceptible glance at Elizabeth, the laces at her throat quivering with the ghost of a sigh. The next instant she was laughing at Richard whose curly head was beginning to droop heavily over his food.

"Poor little fellow," she murmured. "Do look, Elizabeth, he's almost gone!"

"Won't you carry him up-stairs for me, Sam?" Elizabeth begged her husband. "I ought not to have kept him up for dinner.—You'll excuse us just an instant; won't you?"

It was a pretty picture; the tall, stalwart father lifting the child rosy with sleep, and the little mother hovering anxiously near, like a small brown bird. Mr. Hickey observed it solemnly; Miss Tripp smilingly; then, for some reason unknown to both, their eyes met.

"—Er—let me pass you the—bread, Miss Tripp," said Mr. Hickey, short-sightedly choosing among the viands immediately within his reach.

"Thank you, Mr. Hickey," said Evelyn, and again that faint, elusive sigh shook the delicate laces at her throat.

IX

'As Miss Tripp was putting the finishing touches to a careful toilet the next morning she caught the sound of a whispered dispute in the hall; then small knuckles were cautiously applied to the panel of her chamber door.

"Aunty Evelyn! Aunty Evelyn! are you waked up?"

Miss Tripp had been brooding since daylight over the accumulated problems which appeared to crowd her narrow horizon like so many menacing thunder-caps; but she summoned a faint smile to her lips as she opened the door.

"Why, good-morning, dears!" she cried cheerfully at sight of the two small figures in their gay dressing-gowns and scarlet slippers.

"We want to hear a story, Aunty Evelyn," announced Doris, prancing boldly in, each individual curl on her small head bobbing like coiled wire. "We like stories."

"Come here, pet, and let Aunty brush your curls."

“No; I don’t want my curls brushed; I want to hear a story about a beautiful princess going to seek her fortune.”

Miss Tripp suppressed a vague sigh. “I know a poor, forlorn princess who is obliged to go out all alone into the cold world to seek her fortune,” she said. “And I’m very much afraid she won’t find it.”

“Is she young and beautiful?” asked Doris, with wide-eyed attention. “An’ has she got a spangled dress?”

“Dot a spangled dwess?” cooed Richard, like a cheerful little echo.

“No; she’s forced to wear a plain black dress in her wanderings, and she isn’t beautiful at all. She’s not very young either, and ugly lines are beginning to creep about her eyes and across her forehead; and one day, not long ago she found—what do you suppose?”

“A bag of gold?”

“A bag o’ dold?” echoed Richard.

“No, dear; this poor, forlorn little princess found three silver hairs growing among the brown ones just over her ear.”

Miss Tripp’s sweet, drawling voice trembled slightly as she went on with her little fable.

"The princess felt so badly that she shed bitter tears when she saw the glitter of those three silver hairs, because she knew that she could never, never catch up with youth any more."

"What youth—the fairy prince?" Doris wanted to know.

And Richard smiled seraphically as he trilled, "Oh, dood! It was 'e pwince!"

"No, darlings; there isn't any prince at all in this story. There was one—once—away back in the beginning of it; but he—went away—to a far country, and he—never came back."

"Did the princess cry?"

"Did her cwy?"

"Yes; she cried till all the brightness went out of her pretty eyes. Then she stopped crying and laughed instead, because—Oh; because crying didn't help a bit."

"You've been crying, Aunty Evelyn!" said Doris suddenly. "Why-e! your eyes are all teary now!"

"I've got a cold; I'm afraid," prevaricated Miss Tripp.

"I don't like that story," objected Doris. "Unless——" and her eyes brightened, "the

prince came back. Let him come back, Aunt Evelyn; please let him; it'll spoil the story if he doesn't."

Miss Tripp drew a deep breath. "I—wish he might come back," she said; "but I—I'm afraid he never will, dear; and the poor little princess will have to go on alone till——"

"Till what?" demanded Doris indignantly. "I c'n tell a better story 'an that," she added.

"Tell it, dear."

"Well; the princess went out in her horrid ol' black clo'es an' travelled an' travelled, *an' travelled* till she was mos' tired out, an' everywhere she went she asked 'where is my prince?' An' at first all the people said, 'We don't know where any prince is.' But the princess jus' made up her mind she *would* find him; an'—an' bimeby she did—jus' as easy! He was right there all the time; only he was enchanted by an awful bad fairy so she couldn't see him, an' so——"

Doris paused to draw breath, and Richard gravely took up the tale, nodding the while like a gay little china mandarin. "He was 'chanted an' she was 'chanted, an' they bof was 'chanted, an'——"

"Be quiet, Buddy, an' let me tell," interrupted Doris. "She did find him! Course she found him, an'—an' her horrid ol' clo'es was changed to a lovely wedding dress, an'—an'—that's the end of it!"

Miss Tripp laughed. She felt unreasonably cheered by this optimistic finale to her sad little story—which had no ending.

"That would be the beginning of a very cheerful story," she said. "Now Aunt Evelyn must get some breakfast and start out into the cold world."

"Oh! we want you to stay!"

"I'm coming back, dears; yes, indeed; I'll be back this very evening, and then I'll tell you the loveliest story in the world, all about a little goose-girl."

It was a very cold world indeed into which Miss Tripp fared forth that winter morning. But Elizabeth's friendly protests were vain.

"I really must go, dear," Evelyn told her with a firmness quite foreign to her fashionable self. "You don't know—you can't guess how necessary it is for me to find some way of earning money. Mother——" her voice shook a little—"isn't at all well; she never was very strong,

and our losses have quite—Why, Elizabeth, you would hardly know mother; she's so changed. She just sits by the window, and—looks out; I can't seem to rouse her to—to do anything."

Remembering the frail, artificial old lady, with her elaborate toilets and her perpetual aura of rice-powder and sachet, Elizabeth thought this exceedingly probable. "Was it so very bad, Evelyn?" she asked hesitatingly. "You know you only told me——"

"We lost nearly everything when the Back-Bay Security Company failed last fall," said Evelyn quietly. "I—couldn't seem to believe it at first. Of course we were never rich; but we had always lived very comfortably—you know how pleasant it was in our little apartment, Elizabeth, with our good Marie to do everything for us, and all our friends."

Miss Tripp touched her eyelids delicately with her little lace-edged handkerchief. "I—mustn't cry," she said. "It makes one look so like a fright, and I——. Elizabeth, do you suppose I could get a place to—teach? I do love children so, and they always seem to like me."

“What would you teach?” Elizabeth asked, anxiously sympathetic, yet knowing a little more of the ways of the educational world than did Miss Tripp. “You know, Evelyn,—at least I am told—that nearly every teacher has to be a specialist now. You might study kindergartening,” she added more hopefully.

Miss Tripp shook her head. “No; I couldn’t do that. It would take too long, and we should have plenty of time to—starve, I fancy, before——. But what nonsense I’m talking! I must start out this minute; I have an appointment at Whitcher’s Teacher’s Agency this morning. They told me yesterday that a man—a school principal—was coming there to hire a primary teacher. I’m sure I could do that; don’t you think I could, Elizabeth?—Just to teach the children how to read and write and do little sums on their slates. I shall say I can anyway.”

She waved her hand to her friend as she went bravely away down the snowy street, and Elizabeth turned back to her children, feeling a new and unfamiliar sense of gratitude for the warm home nest, with its three turbulent birdlings.

It was Saturday, and the children could not be dispatched to kindergarten as on other mornings of the week. It was also baking-day, and bread and rolls were in slow process of rising to their appointed size in the chilly kitchen. Elizabeth was frugally looking over the contents of her larder with a view to a "picked-up" luncheon, when she heard a small yet distinct knock on the back door.

She opened it upon Robbie Stanford, dancing with impatience on the snowy step.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Brewster," he began with an ingratiating smile, "I've come over to play with Carroll an' Doris. I c'n stay two hours 'n' maybe three, 'nless my mother comes from down-town before that."

"Oh; isn't your mother at home?" asked Elizabeth, with a dubious glance at the red-cheeked, black-eyed young person, who was already edging smilingly toward the closed door of the dining-room. She had entertained Master Stanford before in the absence of his parents and had learned to dread the occasions of his visits.

"No, ma'am," said Robbie politely. "My mother's gone to have her teeth fixed. The'

was a teeny hole in one of 'em, an' the hole ached. Did you ever have holes in your teeth, Mrs. Brewster?"

"Why, yes; I suppose I have," assented Elizabeth doubtfully. "Now, Robbie; I want you to promise me that you will be a good boy this morning, and not get into any mischief; I'm going to be very, very busy, and——"

"I'll be good," responded the young person cheerfully. "I'll be gooder 'an anything. Where's Carroll?"

"He's in the other room; but—wait a minute, dear. You remember the last time you played with Carroll you——"

"Yes, 'm; I 'member. We made an ocean in the bath-room, an' you said——"

"Doris took a bad cold from getting so wet, and Richard almost had the croup."

"I won't do it again," promised the visitor, digging his toes rather shamefacedly under a loosened edge of the linoleum. "I'll jus' look at pictures, 'n'—'n' things like that."

"Very well; I'll take you in where the children are playing. Carroll will be glad to see you; I'm sure," she added, feeling that she

had been rather ungracious to her friend's child.

The three young Brewsters greeted their neighbour with a whoop of joy. Master Stanford was blessed with a pleasantly inventive turn of mind, and one could generally depend upon a break in the monotony of the home circle when he appeared.

"What'll we do?" inquired Doris, prancing gaily around the visitor, who gazed about him at the assembled Brewster toys with a somewhat ennuied expression on his small, serious countenance.

"Aw—I don't know; play with dolls, I guess. I promised I'd be good."

"We might play Indian," suggested Carroll hopefully. "Mother lets us take the couch-cover for a tent."

The visitor considered this proposition in Napoleonic silence. "Have your dolls got real hair?" he inquired darkly of Doris.

"Uh-huh; every one of 'em 's got real hair. My new doll 'at I got Christmas 's got lovely long curls. I don't play with her ev'ry day, 'cause mother's 'fraid I'll break her."

"Go an' get her; get all yer dolls."

"Oh—we don't want t' play with dolls," objected Carroll. "Let's build a depot an' have trains a-smashin' int' each other."

"Nop; we'll play Indian," the visitor said firmly. "I'll show you how."

Under his able generalship the sitting-room was presently transformed into the semblance of a rolling prairie, with a settler's wagon in the midst of the landscape in which travelled Richard as husband and father, driving a span of wicker chairs, while Doris, smothering a fine family of long-haired dolls, sat behind.

Elizabeth who paused to glance in at this stage of the proceedings was gratified by a sight of the four happy, earnest little faces, and the apparent innocuousness of the proceedings.

"We're havin' lots of fun, mother; we're playin' wagon!" Doris explained. "These are all my children; an' we're goin' west to live."

"Det-ap!" vociferated Richard, pulling manfully at the red lines decorated with bells, with which he restrained his restive steeds.

"Whoa!" and he applied the gad with spirit. "Dey's doin' fast, mudzer," he shouted.

96 Those Brewster Children

“That’s a nice play!” chanted Elizabeth; “only be careful of the whip, dear.” Then she hurried up-stairs intent upon restoring immaculate order to the upper part of her house before luncheon.

X

THE better part of an hour had passed before she remembered the children again; then a sound of terrific tumult from below gave wings to her feet.

The scene which met her astonished eyes was one of blood and carnage. The two boys, their faces horribly streaked with scarlet and yellow, their hair stuck full of feathers, had evidently fallen upon the peaceful settlers in their progress across the western plains, and were engaged in plunder and rapine; Richard, bound hand and foot with his scarlet lines, howled with abject terror, while Doris, wild-eyed and furious, fought for the protection of her family of dolls.

"You shan't touch my best doll; you horrid boy!" she shrieked. "I'll tell my—mother! I'll tell—my——"

"Give 'er here! I'm a big Injun an' I'm goin' to scalp every one of your children!"

yelled Robbie Stanford. "Here you, Carroll! what you doin'? There's another kid a-hidin' under the chair—I mean the wagon! She'll scalp easy!"

"Why, children! What are you doing? Carroll, Robert! Stop this instant!"

"We're playing Indian!" panted Carroll, pausing to eye his mother disgustedly through his war-paint. "Doris oughtn't to have yelled so, an' Buddy's nothin' but a bawl-baby. We didn't hurt him a single bit."

"Jus' see what they did to my dolls!" wailed Doris. "Tore the hair off of ev'ry one of 'em!"

"Why, boys! I don't see what you were thinking of to spoil Doris' pretty dolls!"

"We was only scalpin' her children," volunteered the instigator of the crime, with a cheerful grin. "I c'n stick on the hair again, jus' as easy as anythin', if you'll give me the glue. I scalped our baby's doll an' my mother she stuck the hair on again with glue. 'Tain't hard to stick it on; an' we only broke one. We wouldn't 'ave done that, if Doris——"

"What is that stuff on your faces?" demanded Elizabeth sternly, as she collected the

parti-coloured scalps from among the débris on the floor.

"It's only war-paint, mother," explained Carroll. "Indians always put it on their faces; don't you remember the Indians in my Indian book? We made it out of jam an' egg. Celia gave it to us; we got the feathers out the duster."

Elizabeth heaved a great sigh. "Come, and I'll wash your faces," she said; "then I think perhaps Robbie had better——"

"No, ma'am;" said Master Stanford firmly; "it isn't two hours yet. I c'n stay till the whistles blow, an' if you invite me I guess I c'n stay to lunch."

"I'm not going to invite you," slipped off Elizabeth's exasperated tongue. "I want you to go straight home, as soon as I've washed you and made you look respectable."

The youngster's under lip trembled. Two big tears welled up in his black eyes. "I—didn't—mean to—be—naughty!" he quavered. "I don't care if you—whip—me; but I don't want—t' go home. Annie's—cross. She slapped—me—twice this morning! She says I'm the plague o' her life."

Annie was the Stanford's cook and possessed of unlimited authority which she frequently abused, Elizabeth knew. "Where is Livingstone?" she asked in a milder voice, as she removed the traces of her best raspberry jam from the visitor's round face.

"Mother took baby with her; she's going to leave him at gran'ma's house till she comes home. She said I couldn't go, 'cause gran'ma—she's—kind of nervous when I'm there."

"Well, dear; you can stay and have lunch with the children; only——"

"Are you goin' to whip me? I shan't cry if you do."

"My mother doesn't whip anybody," said Carroll superbly; "she's too kind an' good!"

"So's my mother kind an' good! I double dare you to say she isn't!"

"Come, children; you mustn't get to quarrelling. Of course your dear mother is kind and good, Robbie. And you ought to try to be so kind and good and obedient that she won't ever feel that you ought to be whipped."

Master Stanford's black eyes opened very wide at this difficult proposition. "Aw—I

don't know 'bout that," he said diffidently. "I guess my mother 'd jus' 's soon I'd be bad some o' the time. She says she's glad I ain't a milk an' water child like Carroll. An' my papa, he says——"

"You may both sit right down on this sofa," interrupted Elizabeth hastily, "and look at these two books till I call you to luncheon. If you get up once, Robbie, I shall be obliged to send you home to Annie."

"The idea of Marian saying such a thing about my Carroll," she thought unforgivingly, as she set forth bananas and small sweet crackers for the children's dessert. "A milk and water child, indeed; but of course, with a boy like Robbie to deal with, she has to say something. I'm sorry for those two children of hers."

Robbie Stanford stayed till his mother came after him at four o'clock, and Elizabeth laying aside all other occupations supervised her small kindergarten with all the tried patience and kindness of which she was mistress.

Mrs. Stanford was voluble with apologies as she invested her son with his coat and mittens. "I told Annie to have Robbie ask Carroll over

for luncheon," she said, "and I left the play-room all ready for them. I assure you, Elizabeth, I had no notion of inflicting my child upon you—when you have company, too; I'm really ashamed of Robbie."

"Yes, mother," interrupted that young person, "but Annie got mad jus' 'cause I made little round holes in one o' her ol' pies with my finger. I only wanted to see the juice come out. 'N'—'n she slapped me, 'n' tol' me to get out o' her way, or she'd pack her clo'es an' leave. So I——"

Mrs. Stanford's pretty young face flushed with mortification. "I can see that you are thinking me very careless to leave Robbie with a bad-tempered servant," she said, "but Annie is usually so good with the children, and I had to go. I had really neglected my teeth till one of them ached."

"It was no trouble," dissembled Elizabeth mildly, "and really I should much prefer to have Robbie here than to have Carroll at your house when you are away. I should tremble for the results to your property. Of course my Carroll alone is almost as innocuous as milk and water, but with Robert to bring

out his stronger qualities one can never safely predict what will happen."

Mrs. Stanford looked up in sudden consternation, and meeting Elizabeth's smiling glance she laughed and shrugged her shoulders. "Well," she said, "I'm glad, Betty, if you aren't actually worn out mothering my black-eyed lamb. Another time I'll cope with all three of yours, if you'll let me." Then she stooped and kissed Elizabeth in her usual half-mocking way. "Thank you, little neighbour," she murmured; "you make me ashamed of myself, whenever I see you. You are so much better than I."

When Evelyn Tripp returned that afternoon in the gloom of the gathering twilight she stood for a few minutes in the glow of Elizabeth's cheerful fireside, slowly drawing off her gloves. She appeared pallid and worn in the half light, and Elizabeth caught herself wondering if she had lunched.

"Yes, dear," Miss Tripp informed her absent-mindedly; "I had a cup of tea—I think it was tea—and a roll. I wasn't hungry after my interview with the South Popham school principal."

“Oh, then you saw him? Did you—Was he——”

Evelyn laughed a little drearily. “No, ‘dear,” she sighed, shaking her head; “nothing came of it. I suppose I ought not to have expected it. Professor Meeker wanted someone with experience, and—and—a younger person, he said. I didn’t realise that I looked really old, Betty. I thought——”

“You don’t look old, Evelyn,” denied Elizabeth warm-heartedly. “What was the man thinking of?”

“Apparently of a red-cheeked, nursery-maid sort of a person who had taught in the public schools. I saw him afterwards holding forth on the needs of the Popham Institute to a young woman with a high pompadour and wearing a red shirt-waist, a string of blue beads and a large glittering watch-chain—the kind with a slide. I think she must have been what he was looking for. Anyway the Whitcher people told me he had engaged her.”

Elizabeth gazed at her friend, a sort of aching sympathy withholding her from speech.

“After that,” pursued Miss Tripp, “I went

to another agency, and they asked me if I would like to travel abroad with a lady and her two daughters. I thought I should like it very much indeed—I could engage Cousin Sophia to stay with mother, you know—so I took the car out to Chelsea to see a Mrs. Potwin-Pilcher, and found what she was looking for was really an experienced lady's-maid and courier rolled into one, and that she expected 'willing services in exchange for expenses.' I told her I couldn't think of such a thing. Then Mrs. Potwin-Pilcher rose up—she was a big, raw-boned person glittering with diamonds—and informed me that she had fifty-nine applications for the position—I was the sixtieth, it seems—and that she was sure I would be unable to perform the duties of the position. After that I came directly home. Monday I shall——”

Miss Tripp paused apparently to remove her veil; when she finished her sentence it was in a steady, matter-of-fact voice. “I shall go to see an old friend of mother's—a Mrs. Baxter Crownenshield—I think you've heard me speak of her, Elizabeth. She and mother were very intimate once upon a time, and Mr. Crownen-

shield owed his success in business to my father. I'm going to—ask her advice. Now I think I'll go up-stairs and take off these damp skirts, and after that I'll come down and help you mend stockings, or anything——. Only let me do something, Elizabeth!”

There was almost a wail in the tired voice, and Elizabeth, wiser than she knew, pulled out her mending-basket with a smile. “I'm almost ashamed to confess that I need some help badly,” she said. “I hope you won't be horrified at the condition of Carroll's stockings.”

Miss Tripp was quite her charming self again when she reappeared clad in a trailing gown of rosy lavender. She told the children the lively tale of the goose-girl, which she had promised them in the morning, choosing the while the stockings with the most discouraging holes out of Elizabeth's basket and protesting that she loved—yes, positively adored—darning stockings. But she finished her self-imposed task at an early hour, and after playing two or three tuneful little chansonettes on Elizabeth's hard-worked and rather shabby piano, excused herself.

"I must write to mother," she said smilingly. "She quite depends on me for a bright chatty letter every day, and I've so much to tell her of to-day's amusing adventures. Really, do you know that Potwin-Pilcher person ought to go into a novel. She was positively unique!"

Elizabeth was silent for some moments after the sound of Evelyn's light foot had passed from the stair. Then she turned a brooding face upon her husband. "I am so sorry for poor Evelyn," she said.

Sam Brewster stirred uneasily in his chair. "So you said before she arrived," he observed. "I don't see anything about the fair Evelyn to call forth expressions of pity. She looks remarkably prosperous to me."

"Yes; but you don't see everything, Sam. That gown is one she has had for years, and it has been cleaned and made over and over again."

"Well; so have most of yours, my dear, and you don't ask for sympathy on that account."

"Sam, dear, they haven't any money. Can't you understand? They lost everything when

the Back-Bay Security Company failed. Evelyn doesn't know what to do. There is her mother to take care of and you know how helpless she is. I don't suppose she ever really did anything in her whole life."

"It's a problem; I'll admit," agreed her husband, scowling over his unread paper; "but I don't see what we are going to do about it."

"That's the worst of it, Sam; we really can't do anything, and I'm afraid other people won't. I had thought—if nothing else turned up—that perhaps Mrs. Tripp could be induced to go into a home. One of those nice, refined places where one has to pay to be admitted, and then Evelyn—might——"

She paused and looked anxiously at her husband. "We might let her stay here, Sam; and——"

He shook his head. "You're the most self-sacrificing of darlings when it comes to helping your friends," he said; "but I couldn't stand for that, Betty. Two weeks is about my limit, I'm afraid, when it comes to entertaining angels unawares. I'm willing to admit the unique character of Miss Tripp, and

to vote her a most agreeable guest, and all that. But——”

Elizabeth gazed at her husband understandingly. “I know, Sam,” she said, “and I think so too. But——”

XI

"MOTHER, de-ar, can we go out to play in the back yard? I c'n put on my overshoes an' leggins, an' I c'n help Doris too, if you're busy."

Elizabeth looked up from her task of cutting out rompers for her baby with a preoccupied sigh. "You have a little cold now, Carroll," she said doubtfully, "and if you should get wet in the snow——"

"We won't get wet, mother. I pr-romise!"

"Very well, dear; now remember!"

It was cold and clear and there seemed very little danger of dampness as the two children ran out with a whoop of joy into the side yard where the snow-laden evergreens partially screened the Stanford's house from view. Robbie Stanford's round, solemn face was staring at them wistfully from a second-story window as they dashed ecstatically into a snow bank, to emerge white with the sparkling drift.

"Hello, Rob; come on out!" called Carroll.

"I can't," replied Master Stanford, raising the window cautiously.

"Why?"

"Oh, nothin' much; but I guess I'd better stay up here till mother comes home."

"Who said so?"

"That horrid ol' Annie. I was down in the kitchen an' I fired only one clothespin at her, jus' for fun, an' it hit her in the eye; she got mad an' chased me up here an' locked the door."

"Where's your mother?"

"She's gone down town. She said she'd bring me some candy if I was good. Bu' 'f I ain't good she'll take the paddle to me. Say, Carroll!"

"What?"

"Why don't you an' Doris make a skatin' rink?"

"A—what?"

"A skatin' rink. It's great. I know how; I saw a boy makin' one in his back yard. It's awful easy. You just run the hose——"

Master Stanford paused in the course of his exposition to cast a cautious glance behind him. "I guess I'm takin' cold all right," he went on

feelingly. "I hope I am. Then maybe I'll have the croup an' be awful sick. I guess they'd all be sorry, then. Say, Carroll, do you see Annie anywheres?"

Carroll reconnoitred cautiously. "She's hangin' up clo'es in the back yard," he informed the young person aloft.

"If I c'd get out of here, I'd show you how to make that skatin' rink. We c'd make it easy, an' have it ready to skate on b' to-morrow."

"We haven't any skates," objected Doris. "B'sides," with a toss of her scarlet hood, "I don't believe you know how to make a skatin' rink."

"I don't know how? Well, I just bet I do!" exclaimed the prisoner dangling his small person far over the window-sill, while Doris screamed an excited protest. "Pooh! I ain't afraid of fallin' out—ain't afraid of nothin'; I'll bet I c'd jump out this window. I guess I'd have to if the house took on fire. Say, if this house should ketch on fire, Carroll, your house would burn up too. I've got some matches in my pocket," he added darkly; "if I should take a notion I c'd burn up everythin'

on this block, an' maybe the whole town. I'll bet I c'd do it."

"How do you make a skatin' rink?" inquired Carroll, with an anxious glance at his own cosy home, which suddenly appeared very dear to him in view of a general conflagration.

Master Stanford reflected frowningly. "Is our cellar window open?"

"Nope; it's shut."

"Well, first you'll have to dig out a big square place, an' pile snow all round the edge. I'll get out o' here somehow b' the time you get that done; then we'll run it full of water. 'N after that it'll freeze."

"Where c'd we get the water?" inquired Doris, with an unbelieving sniff. "Mother wouldn't let us get it in the kitchen."

"Out of our hose pipe," said Master Stanford grandly. The Brewsters owned no hose, and this fact was a perpetual source of grievance in summer time. "I'll run her right under the hedge into your yard," continued the proprietor of the hose generously, "an' let her swizzle!"

"Oh—my!" gasped the small Brewsters in excited chorus.

“Well; are you goin’ to do it?”

Carroll shook his head. “We promised mother we wouldn’t get wet,” he observed with an air of superior virtue. “’N we always mind our mother, don’t we, Doris?—at least I do. Doris doesn’t always. But she’s a girl.”

Master Stanford cackled with derision. “Aw—you’re a terrible good boy, aren’t you?” he crowed. “My father says you’re a reg’lar prig. He says he’d larrup me, if I was always braggin’ ’bout bein’ so good the way you do. He says I haven’t anythin’ to brag of. Course if you’re ’fraid of your mother——”

Doris pirouetted off across the yard with a flirt of her short skirts. “We aren’t afraid, smarty!” she cried, her pink chin high in air. “An’ we aren’t any gooder an’ you are, Robbie Stanford—at least I’m not; so there! Come on, Carroll; let’s make a skatin’ rink.”

Hard labour with two small snow-shovels produced the semblance of a square enclosure bounded by uneven ridges of soft snow. Mrs. Brewster glancing out of the window at her darlings was pleased to observe their red cheeks and the joyous enthusiasm with which they were pursuing their self-imposed task.

"Dear little souls!" she thought, "how little it takes to keep them happy." Then she became absorbingly busy at her machine in the task of double-stitching the seams of the baby's rompers.

In the meanwhile young Robert Stanford had been released from durance vile by the kind-hearted Annie, whose warm Irish heart had reproached her for her fit of bad temper.

"Sure an' yez didn't mean to hit me eye; did yez, now?" she inquired, as she poked her broad red face into the room.

"Naw; course I didn't," the incarcerated one ingratiatingly assured her. "Say, Annie, c'n I have four cookies?"

"Oh, go 'way wid yez; four's too many entirely; I'll give ye wan wid a clip over yer ear."

"No; honest, I ain't goin' to eat 'em all. I want one for Carroll an' Doris an' two for me."

"An' it's the generous young one he is entirely," laughed Annie. "Come on down an' I'll put yer coat on, and mind yez don't get into no more mischief or I'll be afther tellin' yer mother; thin you'll get a taste of the paddle."

116 Those Brewster Children

"I'll give you a whole lot of my candy, Annie," said the boy earnestly, "if you'll tell mother I was awful good. Will you?"

"'Awful' it was, all right," giggled Annie; "but if I was to say you was good I'd have to burn in purgatory for me sins. I'll say nothin'."

"Where's purgatory, Annie?" inquired the young person after a thoughtful silence.

"It's a warrum place entirely where you'll find yourself some day, I'm thinkin', if yez meddle too much in my kitchen," said Annie darkly. "Here's your cookies; now g'wan wid yez an' don't ye be afther botherin' me no more."

It was a matter which required concerted effort to uncoil the heavy hose, attach it to the water pipe and lift the nozzle to the level of the window; but it was accomplished at last through the united efforts of the two boys ably assisted by Doris, who was all excitement at the prospect of sliding on a real ice pond in her own yard.

"I guess our daddy'll be s'prised when he sees us goin' around like lightnin' on reg'lar ice," she said. "He's got skates, our daddy

has, an' he c'n skate like everythin', our daddy can."

"Pooh! that's nothin'," retorted Master Stanford; "my father c'n beat your father all holler. He's a whole lot taller 'n your father, an' our house is higher 'n yours, too."

"It's p'liter not to brag," said Doris, ignoring her own deflections from civility. "Oh, my, look at the water spurting out of that teeny, weeny hole! It's just like a fountain."

The two boys were laboriously dragging the heavy hose across the yard, and in the process other holes appeared through which the water hissed and gurgled with increasing force.

"I don't care," the proprietor of the hose assured them loftily. "It's an' ol' thing anyway. We're goin' to have a great long new one nex' summer; then maybe we'll give you this one. My father's so rich he don't care. Now I'll poke the nozzle through the hedge an' let her swizzle. Get out o' the way, Doris; I don't care if I do get wet."

Ten mintues later Mrs. Stanford, rosy and cheerful, after her brisk walk in the winter sunshine, appeared on the scene. "What are you doing, kiddies?" she inquired pleasantly; then

in a more doubtful tone. "What *are* you doing? Why, Robbie!"

"We're jus' makin' a skatin' rink, and the ol' hose leaks like thunder," explained her son, employing a simile he had heard his father use the day before, and which he had considered particularly manly and amirable.

"Robert! you are soaked to the skin—and so is Carroll. Go right into the house. What do you mean by being so naughty?"

"You didn't say I couldn't take the hose," sulked the boy, surveying his parent from under lowering brows.

"Go in the house, sir; I'll attend to you presently," said his mother sternly.

"Oh, please; I'll be good! I didn't—mean—to," whined the child. "Carroll an' Doris, they wanted a skatin' rink, an' I——"

Mrs. Stanford stooped to turn off the water. "Go home at once," she said to her neighbour's children. "And you, Robert, go up to the bathroom and take off your wet clothing." Her pretty young face was flushed with anger. "I never saw such dreadful children!" she murmured wrathfully.

"My, but she's mad!" whispered Carroll,

looking after the slim, erect figure, "it wasn't our fault their ol' hose leaked."

"I guess our mother'll be some mad, too," said Doris doubtfully; "that water spurted all over my leggins; an' now I guess it's freezing."

The two walked slowly across the yard, ploughing through the rapidly congealing slush, which was the disappointing outcome of two hours of hard work.

"I don't like Robbie Stanford one bit," said Doris disgustedly. "He's always getting us into mischief."

"I said we ought not to get wet," Carroll reminded her eagerly. "Don't you remember I did? An' you said——"

"I don't like you either," pursued the little girl stonily. "I don't b'lieve I like boys *a'tall*; so there!"

"I'm all wet," she announced to her mother, "an' Carroll's wetter 'an I am; an'—we—we're—both—c-cold!"

It was characteristic of Elizabeth that she thoroughly dried and warmed the children before asking any questions. Then despite their dismayed protests she put them both to bed. "You disobeyed me," she told them,

“and now you’ll have to stay in your beds till to-morrow morning. I’ll explain to your father. Of course he’ll be disappointed not to see you at dinner; but I can’t help that.”

A period of depressing silence followed during which both children caught the distant sounds of passionate and prolonged crying from the neighbouring house.

“It’s Robbie,” said Carroll in an awed whisper; “his mother’s whipping him with that butter-paddle o’ hers. She does that when he’s awful bad.”

“I’d bite her!” murmured Doris between her clenched teeth. “I’d—I’d—scratch her!” She burst into excited tears. “I’d just—hate my mother if she—if she hurt me like that!”

“Pooh! Rob don’t care so very much,” Carroll assured her; “he says he hollers jus’ as loud as he can so his mother’ll stop quicker. I s’pose,” he continued after a thoughtful pause, “Robbie ’ll be up to dinner jus’ the same, an’ we’ll be here eatin’ bread and milk.”

XII

ELIZABETH'S promised explanation to the father of the culprits above stairs led to a spirited discussion between the husband and wife, after Miss Tripp had retired to her apartment.

"Poor little kids," Sam Brewster said whimsically. "I believe I'm glad I'm not your child, Betty,—I mean, of course, that I'm glad I'm your husband," he amended quickly, as her unsmiling eyes reproached him. "Don't you think you were a little hard on them, though?"

"Hard on them?" she echoed indignantly. "You're much more severe with the children than I am, Sam,—when you're at home. You know you are."

He smoked thoughtfully for a minute or two before replying. "Look here, Betty," he said at last, "you're right in a way. I'm not half so patient as you are, I'll admit. But I wonder if we don't all miss the mark when it comes to disciplining children?—Wait—just a

minute before you answer. I've been thinking a whole lot about this business of home rule since we—er—discussed it the other day, and I've come to the conclusion that the only thing to do is to let universal law take its course with them. They are human beings, my dear, and they've got to come up against the law in its broader sense sooner or later. Let 'em begin right now."

She was eyeing him pityingly. "And by that you mean——?"

"I mean," he went on, warming to his subject, "that you've got to teach a child what it means to reap what he sows. If Richard wants to put his finger on the stove and investigate the phenomenon of calorics, let him. He won't do it twice."

"And if he wants to paddle in the aquarium of a cold winter day, you'd——"

"Let him—of course," said Sam stoutly. "He'd feel uncomfortably damp and chilly after a while."

"Yes; and have the croup or pneumonia that same night."

"You're hopelessly old-fashioned, Betty," he laughed; "you shouldn't introduce the

croup or pneumonia idea into the infant consciousness. But seriously, my dear, I believe I'm right. If you don't teach the children to recognise the relation between cause and effect now—so that it becomes second nature to them, how are they going to understand the subject when they're put up against it later? You'll find the mother bird and the mother bear, and, in fact, all the animal creation carefully instilling the idea of cause and effect into their offspring from the very beginning; while human parents are as constantly protecting their children from the effects of the causes which the children ignorantly set in motion. In other words we persist in undoing the work of old 'Mother Be-done-by-as-you-did.' It's a blunder, in my opinion. But of course, I'm a mere man and my ideas are not entitled to much consideration."

Elizabeth gazed at her husband with open admiration. "Of course they are entitled to consideration," she said decidedly. "And I believe what you have said—with reservations. Suppose Baby Dick, for example, should lean out of the window too far—a second-story window, I mean—and I should see him doing it

and feel pretty certain he was going to pitch out head first and cripple himself for life. Do you think I ought to stand still and let the law of gravitation teach him not to do it a second time?"

Sam Brewster laid down his pipe and gazed steadfastly at his wife. She was looking extremely young and bewitchingly pretty as she leaned toward him, her cheeks pink, her brown eyes glowing with earnestness in which he thought he detected a spark of her old girlish mischief.

"‘And still the wonder grew,’" he quoted solemnly, "‘that one small head could carry all she knew!’"

"Please answer me, Sam," she insisted.

"Well, of course you've got me. You'd have to haul in the young person by the heels, and——"

"And what, exactly, if you please?"

"You might illustrate—with some fragile, concrete object, like an egg—as to what would happen if he fell out," said Sam, with exceeding mildness, "and——"

"In other words," she interrupted him triumphantly, "I ought to interfere *some* of

the time between cause and effect. The question being when to interfere and when not to."

"Exactly!" he said, planting an irrelevant kiss on the pink cheek nearest him. "And that, my dear Betty, is your job—and, of course, mine, when I'm here. But I still hold that the natural penalty is best—when it's convincingly painful yet entirely innocuous."

"What is the natural penalty for eating cookies out of the box when you've been forbidden to do it?" she wanted to know.

He chuckled as certain memories of his boyhood came back to him. "My word!" he said, "I wish I could ever taste anything half as good as the cookies out of Aunt Julia Brewster's crock—it was a cooky-crock in those days. Of course I was forbidden to go to it without permission, and also of course I did it."

"What happened?" she demanded, the mischief growing bolder in her eyes.

He reflected. "Aunt Julia wouldn't let me have any at table on several occasions; but I—er—regret to say that I was not duly impressed by the punishment. A cooky—one cooky—decorously taken from a china plate

at the conclusion of a meal did not, in my youthful opinion, court comparison with six—eight—ten cookies, moist and spicy from their seclusion and eaten with an uncloyed appetite. Let's—er—change the subject for the moment, my dear. Of course I'm right, but I appear to be hopelessly treed. Tell me how our friend Miss Tripp is getting on. She appeared somewhat depressed at dinner-time, and I didn't like to ask for information for fear there was nothing doing."

Elizabeth sighed sympathetically. "Evelyn had a dreadfully disappointing day," she told him. "But"—her eyes dancing again—"she met Mr. Hickey down town, and he actually invited her to lunch with him."

Sam whistled softly. "Hickey is progressing," he said approvingly. "Did he take her to the business men's lunchroom? Hickey has conscientious scruples against going anywhere else. I asked him into Colby's one day and he declined on the ground of his duty as a constant patron of the B. M. L. He said his table was reserved for him there by the season, and——"

"How absurd!" laughed Elizabeth. "But,

I was going to tell you; Evelyn remembered another engagement, and so——” she stopped short, her eyes growing luminous. “Sam,” she said suddenly, “I don’t know what to think of Evelyn; she really didn’t have any lunch at all; she said so when she came. I made her a cup of tea; she looked so worn and tired. I wonder if Mr. Hickey could have said anything, or—— What do you think, Sam?”

Sam yawned behind his paper. “I’m really too sleepy to give to the question the profound attention which it merits; but to-morrow when my intellect is fresh and keen, I’ll endeavour to——”

“You mean you don’t care.”

“Suppose I did care, my very dear Betty; suppose my whole career depended upon what Hickey said—or didn’t say; what could I do about it?”

“I’m sure I don’t know, Sam,” said his Elizabeth meekly. But her eyes were still full of speculative curiosity as she went up-stairs.

XIII

THE facts in the case, if known to Elizabeth, might have served to throw a clearer light upon Miss Tripp's somewhat unsatisfactory account of her day in the city. In the first place, the weather which had dawned bright and sunny had suddenly turned nasty, with a keen wind driving large, moist snowflakes into the faces of pedestrians. Evelyn had found herself without an umbrella and wearing her best hat and gown walking the long block which intervened between her destination and the car from which she had alighted.

Mrs. Baxter Crownenshield was known to the wide circle of her acquaintances as a large, funereal person, invariably clothed in black, and as perpetually exuding a copious and turgid sympathy upon all who came in contact with her, somewhat after the manner of a cuttle-fish. She lived in a mansion, large and dull like herself, on Beacon Street, where she occupied herself exclusively with those dubious ac-

tivities euphemistically called "charitable work."

When Miss Evelyn Tripp was shown into Mrs. Crownenshield's chilly reception-room that morning in February, she shivered a little in her damp clothes as she sat down on a slippery chair and endeavoured vaguely to forecast the coming interview. Her mother had suggested Mrs. Crownenshield as a sort of *dernier resort*, with a fretful reminiscence of the days when the Baxter Crownenshields were poor and lived in a third-story back room of a fifth-rate boarding-house.

"I used to give Jane Crownenshield my gowns after I had worn them a season," Mrs. Tripp said querulously; "and glad enough she was to get them. As for her husband, he was not much of a man. Your father used to say Crownenshield couldn't be trusted to earn his salt at honest work in a counting-room; but when the war broke out he borrowed five hundred dollars of your father, and bought and sold army stores. After that he grew rich somehow, and we grew poor. But Jane Crownenshield ought to remember that she owes everything she has to-day to your father."

Miss Tripp perched uncomfortably on the unyielding surface of the inhospitable hair-cloth chair she had chosen, gazed attentively at the portrait of the late lamented Crownenshield which hung over the mantle-piece, and at the bronze representation of the same large and self-satisfied countenance smirking at her from a shadowy corner, while she repeated nervously the opening words with which she hoped to engage his widow's friendly interest. It seemed an interminable period before she heard the slow and ponderous footfall which presaged the majestic approach of Mrs. Crownenshield; as a matter of fact, it was almost exactly half an hour by the dismal-voiced black marble clock surmounted by an urn.

Miss Tripp arose upon the entrance of the large lady in black and held out her hand with a feeble effort after the sprightly ease of her old society manner. "Good morning, Mrs. Crownenshield," she began, in a voice which in spite of herself sounded weak and timid in the gloomy, high-ceiled room. "I do hope I haven't interrupted any important labour—I know you are always so much occupied with—charities, and——"

Mrs. Crownenshield stared meditatively at Miss Tripp's small, slight figure, her gaze appearing to concern itself particularly with her head-gear from which drooped two large dispirited plumes.

"Tripp—Tripp? I don't place you," she said at last,—“unless you are Mary Tripp's daughter. She had a daughter, I believe.” The Crownenshield voice was loud and authoritative; it appeared to demand information as something due, upon which interest had accumulated.

“I am Mary Tripp's daughter,” Evelyn informed her, in a sudden panic lest she be mistaken for an object of charity; then she hesitated, at a loss for something to say next.

Mrs. Crownenshield sighed heavily. “Poor woman,” she observed lugubriously. “Mary Tripp has had many trials to support.”

Evelyn's small, sensitive face grew a shade paler. “Yes,” she agreed, “my dear mother has had more than her share of sorrow and loss. I wonder if you knew that we—that mother lost all of her remaining property in the failure of the Back-Bay Security Company?”

Mrs. Crownenshield's cold grey eyes opened a little wider upon her visitor. "How regrettable!" she observed. "No; I had not heard of it. But I fear many others have suffered with Mary Tripp. Fortunately for me, my dear late husband's investments were conservative and safe. Mr. Crownenshield did not approve of Trust Companies—except those which he controlled himself. If John Tripp had seen fit to leave his money in trust with Mr. Crownenshield—and I have always felt surprised and hurt to think that he did not do so, after all the business relations of the past—Mary Tripp would be quite comfortable to-day. Pray convey to your poor afflicted mother my condolences, and tell her that I was greatly grieved to learn of her misfortunes."

Evelyn murmured incoherent thanks.

"I—came this morning to ask—your advice," she added after a heavy pause. "I thought—that is, mother thought—that perhaps you—might know of something I could do to—to earn money. I must do something, you know." She had grown hot and cold with the shame of this confession under the unwink-

ing gaze of Mrs. Crownenshield's colourless eyes.

That lady folded her large white hands upon which glittered several massive rings.

"I shall be very glad to advise you," she said, "if you will acquaint me with your qualifications for service. I have frequent opportunities to place indigent but worthy females, such as you appear to be. Are you a good seamstress?"

"I fear not, Mrs. Crownenshield," faltered Evelyn. "I never liked sewing."

"You could earn a dollar a day as a skilled seamstress," intoned the female philanthropist inexorably. "Whether you like sewing or not is of very little consequence in view of your necessities."

"I thought I should prefer teaching, or——"

Mrs. Crownenshield glanced abstractedly at the massive watch which depended from some sort of funereal device in black enamel upon her ample bosom, and compared its silent information with that of the black marble time-piece on the mantle. Then she arose with a smile, which appeared to have been carven upon her large pallid face with the effect of a mask.

"I am very sorry indeed that I can not give you more of my time this morning," she said mournfully. "But I have a board-meeting of The Protestant Evangelical Refuge for aged, indigent and immoral females at half-past eleven o'clock; and at one I am due at a luncheon of the Federated Woman's Charitable Associations of Boston, at which I shall preside."

She arose and enfolded both of Miss Tripp's small cold hands in her large, moist clasp, with an air of fervid emotion.

"I feel for you," she sighed, "I do indeed! and my heart bleeds for your unfortunate mother. Mary Tripp was always accustomed to every luxury and extravagance. She must feel the change to abject poverty; but I trust she will endeavour to lift her thoughts from the sordid cares of earth toward that better land where—I feel sure—my dear late husband is enjoying the rest that remaineth. After all, my poor girl, the consolations of religion are the only sure refuge in this sad world. I always strive to point the way to those situated like yourself."

"Thank you, Mrs. Crownenshield," said Evelyn stonily.

"If there is anything I can do to assist you further, don't fail to call upon me freely!" warbled the lady, as Evelyn passed out into the hall. "I will send you copies of the literature illustrating the work of our various refuges and asylums. You may be glad to refer to them later."

Evelyn found herself in the street, she hardly knew how, her little feet carrying her swiftly away from the Crownenshield residence. She felt hurt and outraged in every fibre of her being, and her tear-blurred eyes took little note of the weather which had changed from a wet clinging snow to mingled rain and sleet, which beat upon her unprotected face like invisible whips. She did not know where to go, or what to do next; but she hurried blindly forward, her limp skirts gathered in one hand, her head bent against the piercing wind.

Then, strangely enough, the stinging blast seemed suddenly shut away and she looked up to find a stout umbrella interposed between her and the storm. The handle of the umbrella

was grasped by a large, masterful-looking hand in a shabby brown glove, and a broad shoulder hove into view from behind the hand.

"Where is your umbrella, Miss Tripp?" inquired a voice, as masterful in its way as the hand.

"Oh!—I—that is, I forgot it," she faltered, looking up into Mr. George Hickey's eyes, with a belated consciousness of the tears in her own. "The rain—is—wet," she added, with startling originality.

"Hum; yes," assented Mr. Hickey thoughtfully. He was striving in his dull masculine way to account for the wan, woe-begone expression of Miss Tripp's face and for the tell-tale drops on her thick brown lashes. "I was on my way to luncheon when I saw you," he went on. "—Er—have you—lunched, Miss Tripp?"

Evelyn shook her head. "Is it as late as that?" she said. "I ought to go——"

"Not back to Mrs. Brewster's," he said; "it's too late for that.—Er—won't you give me the—er—the pleasure of lunching with you? I—er—in fact, I'm exceedingly hungry myself, and——"

Mr. Hickey stopped short and looked about him somewhat wildly. It had just occurred to him that he could not invite Miss Tripp to accompany him to the business men's lunch-room where he usually took his unimportant meal, and he wondered what sort of a place women went to anyway, and what they ate?

The experienced Miss Tripp smiled; she appeared to read his thoughts with an ease which astonished while it frightened him a little.

"It is very good of you to ask me, Mr. Hickey," she said prettily, "and I shall be very happy to take lunch with you. Do you go to Daniels'? It is such a nice place, I think, and not far up the street."

"Oh—er—yes; certainly. I like Daniels' exceedingly. A good place, very. We'll—ah—just step across and—— Oh, I beg your pardon!"

Mr. Hickey was so agitated by the sudden and unprecedented position in which he found himself that he almost knocked Miss Tripp's hat off with a sudden swoop of his umbrella, as they crossed the street.

"How stupid of me!" he cried, as she put

it straight with one little hand, smiling up at him forgivingly as she did it. "I'm an awkward sort of a chap, anyway," he went on with another illustrative jab of the umbrella. "I guess I'm hopeless as—er—a ladies' man."

"Oh, no, you aren't," contradicted Miss Tripp sweetly. "I never felt more relieved and—and happy than when I looked up to find your big umbrella between my head and the storm. I went off to town in such a hurry this morning that I left my umbrella in the rack in Elizabeth's hall."

He tried not to look his curiosity; then blurted out his uppermost thought. "You looked awfully done up when I overtook you; what—er——"

"I was," she confessed. "I was ready to weep with rage and disappointment. Have you ever felt that way?"

"Well, no," said Mr. Hickey candidly; "I can't say that I've ever got to the point you mention. I don't believe I've shed a tear since—since my mother died. She was the only person in the world who cared a rap whether I sank or swam, survived or perished, and after she went. I—— But I've been angry

enough to—er—cuss a little now and then. Of course ladies can't do that, so——”

Evelyn smiled appreciatively. “It might have relieved my feelings if you had been there to use a little—strong language for me,” she said. Then she told him something of her visit to Mrs. Crownenshield and its outcome.

“Hum, yes!” he observed. “I fancy I know her sort, and I—er—despise it. What did you want her to do for you? There, now I've put my foot in! It's none of my business of course, Miss Tripp, and you needn't tell me.”

Evelyn hesitated. “I shouldn't like you to think I'm whining or complaining,” she said soberly; “but there's no reason why you—or anyone—shouldn't know that I am looking for work. I never have worked”—the brave voice faltered a little—“but that's no reason why I shouldn't work now. In fact, it's a reason why I must. Everything was different when I was a girl to what it is now,” she went on, calmly ignoring her “feelings-on-the-subject-of-her-age” which had of late years been abnormally sensitive. “I wasn't brought up to do anything more useful than to sew lace on a pocket-

handkerchief and play a few easy pieces on the piano. Of course I learned a little French—enough to chatter ungrammatically when we went abroad—and a little bad German, and a little—a very little execrable Italian—nothing of a usable quantity or quality, you see; so now I find myself——”

“But why? What has happened?” he urged in a low voice.

“The usual and what should have been the expected, I suppose,” she told him. “We—that is mother and I—lost our money. We never thought of such a thing happening. We had always drawn checks for what we wanted, and that was all there was of it—till the bank closed, and then of course we had to think.”

“I’m—Confound it; it’s too bad!” he said strongly. “Banks have no business to close; it’s—er—it’s a national disgrace. There ought to be some law to—er—put a stop to such outrages on civilisation!”

Miss Tripp said nothing. She was experiencing a quite natural revulsion of feeling, and was now exceedingly sorry that she had confided anything of her affairs to Mr. Hickey. “He’ll think of course that I am making a

cheap bid for sympathy—perhaps trying to borrow money of him,” she thought, while a painful scarlet crept up into her pale cheeks.

Mr. Hickey was not a tactful man. He did not observe the unwonted colour in Miss Tripp’s face, nor the proud light in her eyes.

“I’ve got more money than I know what to do with,” he said bluntly, “and—er—I wish you’d allow me to——”

Miss Tripp stopped short. “Oh, Mr. Hickey,” she exclaimed regretfully, “I don’t know what you will think of me for accepting your kind invitation to luncheon, and then leaving you—as I must. I’d entirely forgotten an important engagement to meet—a friend of mine. I shall have to ask you to excuse me. It’s too bad, isn’t it? But I am so forgetful. And—please don’t worry about my absurd confidences. Really, I exaggerated; I always do. We are perfectly comfortable—mother and I—only of course it was hard to lose our *surplus*—the jam on our bread, as I tell mother. But one can live quite comfortably on plain bread, and it is far better for one; I know that. Good-bye! So kind of you to shelter me!—No; I couldn’t think of taking

your umbrella! Really; don't you see the rain is over; besides, I'm going to take this car. Good-bye, and thank you so much!"

Mr. Hickey stood quite still on the corner where she had left him and stared meditatively after the car, which bore her away, for the space of two unfruitful minutes. Then he turned squarely around and plodded down town to the business men's lunchroom. He did not care, he told himself, to change his habits by lunching at Daniels', which was a foolishly expensive place and haunted by crowds of women shoppers. Women were singular things, anyway. Mr. Hickey was satisfied, on the whole, that he was not obliged to meet them often. And later in the day he was selfishly pleased that he had not been obliged to loan his umbrella; for the rain, which had ceased a little, came down in icy torrents which froze as it fell on the sidewalks and branches of the trees.

XIV.

EVELYN TRIPP never informed anyone where she went on the car that bore her triumphantly away from Mr. Hickey and the conversation which had suddenly grown intolerable. The intolerable part of it was her own fault, she told herself. And—well, she realised that she was paying for it, as she jounced along over mile after mile of uneven track, through unfamiliar, yet drearily monotonous streets. Damp, uncomfortable-looking people came and went, and from time to time the conductor glanced curiously at the small lady in the fashionably-cut jacket and furs, who shrank back in her corner gazing with unseeing eyes out of the dripping windows.

“Las’ stop!” he shouted impatiently, as the car came to a groaning standstill away out in a shabby suburb, where several huge factories were in process of erection.

Miss Tripp started up and looked out at the sodden fields and muddy, half-frozen road. Two or three dirty, dispirited-looking men

boarded the car and sat down heavily, depositing their tools at their feet. Then the driver and conductor, who had swung the trolley around, and accomplished other official duties incident to the terminal, entered, closing the doors behind them with a professional crash.

Both stared at Miss Tripp who had subsided into her corner again.

"Say, Bill; nice weather for a trolley-ride—heh?" observed the motor-man, shifting an obvious quid of something in his capacious mouth.

"Aw—you shut up, Cho'ley!" growled his superior.

Bill thoughtfully obeyed, drumming with his feet on the floor and pursing up his tobacco-stained lips in an inaudible whistle. Presently he glanced at his big nickel watch and shook his head at the conductor. "A minute an' a half yet, b' mine," he said; "made a quick trip out."

Then he cast another side-long glance at the one lady passenger. "Got carried past, I guess," he suggested with a wink. "Better look sharp for the right street on the way back, Bill."

"You bet," observed the other, with his hand on the bell-rope. "I'm on the job all right."

Elizabeth Brewster was giving her youngest son his supper when her friend Miss Tripp entered her hospitable door.

"Oh, Evelyn!" she began, with an eager air of welcome; "I was hoping you would come home early to-night, Marian Stanford was here this afternoon; she wants to go—— But Evelyn, dear, what ever is the matter? You're as white as a ghost. Don't you feel well?"

Miss Tripp valiantly plucked up a wan smile.

"I am perfectly well," she declared; "but, Betty dear, could you give me a cup of tea? I was so—busy and—hurried to-day that I forgot all about my luncheon, and I just this minute realised it."

Elizabeth hurried into the kitchen on hospitable cares intent and Evelyn sank wearily into a chair. Her head was swimming with weariness and the lack of food; cold, discouraged drops crowded her blue eyes.

Richard quietly absorbing bread and milk

from a gay china bowl gazed at her with a round speculative stare.

"Cwyin'?" he observed in a bird-like voice.

"No, dear," denied Miss Tripp, winking resolutely. "What made you think of such a thing, precious?"

"'Cause it's—it's naughty to cwy."

"I know it, dear; and I'm going to smile; that's better; isn't it?"

Her somewhat hysterical effort after her usual cheerful expression did not appear to deceive Richard. He waved his spoon charged with milk in her general direction.

"I'm a dood boy," he announced with pride.

"I eat my shupper an' I don't cwy."

"Here is the tea you're evidently perishing for, Evelyn dear," said Elizabeth, setting a steaming cup before her guest; "and I've some good news for you—at least I'm hoping you'll like it. I'm sure I should love to have you so near us, and it would give you plenty of time to choose something permanent."

Miss Tripp's wan face had taken on a tinge of colour as she sipped the hot tea. "What is it, Betty?" she asked quietly enough, though her heart was beating hard with hope deferred.

"Did that Popham man call to see me after all?"

"No," Elizabeth said; "it isn't the Popham man. And perhaps you won't like the idea at all. I started to tell you that Marian—Mrs. Stanford—was here this afternoon. She came over to tell me that her husband is going to California on a business trip; he wants her to go with him and she is wild to go; but she doesn't know what to do with the two children. She can't take them along, as Mr. Stanford will be obliged to travel rapidly from place to place. Her mother is almost an invalid and can't bear the excitement of having them with her. It just occurred to me that perhaps you might be willing to stay with the children. I spoke of it to Marian and she was delighted with the idea. You could have your mother come and stay with you, you know, and the house is so comfortable and pretty."

Elizabeth broke off in sudden consternation at sight of the usually self-possessed Miss Tripp shaken with uncontrollable sobs. "Why, Evelyn," she cried, "I never thought you would feel that way about it. Of course I had no business to speak of you to Marian

without consulting you first; but I thought—I hoped——”

“It— isn’t that, Elizabeth,” Miss Tripp managed to say, “I’m—not offended—only tired. Don’t mind me; I’ll be all right as soon as I’ve swallowed my tea and——”

“It’s naughty to cwy,” chirped Richard, waving his milky spoon rebukingly. “I’m a dood boy. I eat my shupper an’ I don’t cwy.”

In a fresh gown, with her nerves once more under control, Evelyn was able to look more composedly at the door which had so unexpectedly opened in the blind wall of her dilemma. There were serious disadvantages—as Elizabeth was careful to point out—in attempting the charge of the Stanford children, in conjunction with various undeniable privileges and a generous emolument.

“Robbie is certainly a handful for anybody to cope with, and the baby is a spoiled child already.” Elizabeth’s voice sank to a soulful murmur, as she added, “Marian has always believed in punishing her children—whipping them, I mean; and you know, Evelyn, how that brutalises a child.”

As a matter of fact, Miss Tripp knew very

little about children; but like the majority of persons who have never dealt familiarly with infant humanity, she had formulated various sage theories concerning their upbringing.

"Dear Elizabeth," she replied, "how true that is; and yet how few mothers realise it. Children should be controlled solely by love; I am sure I shall have no trouble at all with those two dear little boys."

And so it was settled. In less than a week's time Mrs. Stanford had departed upon her long journey. At the last she clung somewhat wistfully to Elizabeth.

"I'm almost afraid to go and leave the children," she said. "Of course I feel every confidence in Miss Tripp; but you know, Betty, how resourceful Robert is, and how—— But you'll have an eye to them all; won't you? And telegraph us if—if anything should happen?"

Elizabeth promised everything. But she was conscious of a great weight of responsibility as the carriage containing the light-hearted Stanfords rolled away down the street. "Oh, Evelyn!" she said; "do watch Robbie carefully, and be sure and call me if the least thing is the matter with the baby."

Miss Tripp smiled confidently. "I'm not the least bit worried," she said. "Little Robert loves me devotedly already, and I am sure will be most tractable and obedient; and Livingstone is a very healthy child. Besides, you know, I have mother, who knows everything about children."

She went back into her newly acquired domain, feeling that a sympathising Providence had been very good to her, and resolving to do her full duty, as she conceived it, by the temporarily motherless Stanford children.

In pursuance of this resolve she repaired at once to the nursery when the Stanfords had taken leave of their offspring, after presenting them with a parcel of new toys upon which the children had fallen with shouts of joy.

"I really could not go away and leave them looking wistfully out of the windows after us," Mrs. Stanford had declared, with tears in her bright brown eyes. "I should think of them that way every minute while we were gone, and imagine them crying after me."

"They won't cry, dear Mrs. Stanford," Evelyn had assured her. "I shall devote every moment of my time to them and keep them

just as happy as wee little birdlings in a nest."

The youngest Stanford child was peacefully engaged in demolishing a book of bright pictures, while his elder brother was trying the blade of a glittering jack-knife on the wood of the mantel-piece, when Miss Tripp re-entered the room.

"Oh, my dears!" exclaimed their new guardian with a tactful smile, "I wouldn't do that!"

The Stanford infant paid no manner of attention to the mildly worded request; but the older boy turned and stared resentfully at her. "This is my jack-knife," he announced conclusively; "my daddy gave it to me to whittle with, an' I'm whittlin'."

"But your father wouldn't like you to cut the mantel-shelf; don't you know he wouldn't, dear?"

"I'm goin' to whittle it jus' the same, 'cause you ain't my mother; you ain't even my gran'-ma."

Miss Tripp, unable to deny the refutation, looked about her distractedly. "I'll tell Norah to get you a nice piece of wood," she said. "Where is Norah, dear?"

152 Those Brewster Children

“She’s gone down to the corner to talk to her beau,” replied Master Robert, calmly continuing to dig his new knife into the mantel. “She’s got a p’liceman beau, an’ so’s Annie; on’y hers is a street-car driver. Have you got one, Miss Tripp?”

“Call me Auntie Evelyn, dear; that’ll be nicer; don’t you think it will? And—Robert dear; if you’ll stop cutting the mantel Auntie Evelyn will tell you the loveliest story, all about——”

“Aw—I don’t like stories much. They’re good ’nough for girls I guess, but I——”

Then the knife slipped and the amateur carpenter burst into a deafening roar of anguish.

XV

VERY much to his surprise, Mr. Hickey found himself disposed to hark back to the day on which he had so unexpectedly parted company with Miss Tripp on the corner of Tremont and Washington Streets. He had intended, he told himself, to order for their luncheon broiled chicken, macaroons and pink ice-cream, as being articles presumably suited to the feminine taste. He remembered vaguely to have heard Miss Tripp mention pink ice-cream, and all women liked the wing of a chicken. Was the unknown "friend" with whom she had made that previous engagement, a man or a woman? he wondered, deciding with the well-known egoism of his sex in favour of the first mentioned. The man was a cad, anyway, Mr. Hickey was positive—though he could not have particularised his reasons for this summary conclusion. And being a cad, he was not worthy of Miss Tripp's slightest consideration.

If he had the thing to do over again, he told himself, he would speak up boldly to Miss Tripp

concerning his own rights in the matter; he would remind her—humorously of course—that possession was said to be nine points in the law; and that he, Hickey, was disposed to do battle for the tenth point with any man living.

He grew quite hot and indignant as he pictured his rival sitting opposite Miss Tripp in some second-class restaurant, ordering chicken and ice-cream. As like as not the other fellow wouldn't know that she preferred her ice-cream pink, and——.

Mr. Hickey pulled himself up with a jerk at this point in his meditations and told himself flatly that he was a fool, and that further, when he came right down to it, he did not care a copper cent about Miss Tripp's luncheons, past, present or to come. What he really wanted to know—and this desire gained poignant force and persistence as the days passed—was whether he had said or done anything to offend the lady. He remembered that he had accidentally jabbed Miss Tripp's hat with his umbrella, and very likely put a feather or two out of business. That would be likely to annoy any woman. Perhaps she had felt

that his awkwardness was unpardonable, and his further acquaintance undesirable.

Under the goad of this latter uncomfortable suspicion—in two weeks' time it had grown into a conviction—he actually made his way into a milliner's shop and inquired boldly for "feathers."

"What sort of feathers, sir?" inquired the cool, bright-eyed young person who came forward to ask the needs of the tall, professional-looking man wearing glasses and exceedingly shabby brown gloves.

"Why—er—just feathers; the sort ladies wear on hats."

The young person smiled condescendingly. "Something in plumes, sir?" she asked, "or was it coque or marabout you wished to see?"

"Something handsome. Long—er—and not too curly."

The young woman produced a box and opened it.

"How do you like this, sir? Only twenty dollars. Was it for an old lady or a young lady?"

"Er—a young lady," said Mr. Hickey hastily. "That is to say, she——"

“Your wife, perhaps?” and the young person smiled intelligently. “How would your lady like something like this?” And she held up a sweeping plume of a dazzling shade of green. “This is quite the latest swell thing from Paris, sir; can be worn on either a black or a white hat.”

Mr. Hickey reflected. “I—er—think the feathers were black,” he observed meditatively; “but I like colours myself. Red—er—is a handsome colour in feathers.” He eyed the young person defiantly. “I always liked a good red,” he asserted firmly.

“These new cerise shades are all the rage now in Paris, N’Yo’k an’ Boston,” agreed the young person, promptly pulling out another box. “Look at this grand plume in shaded tints, sir! Isn’t it just perfectly stunning?”

It was. Mr. Hickey surveyed it in rapt admiration, as the young person dangled it alluringly within range of his short-sighted vision.

“I’d want two of those,” he murmured.

“Forty-eight, seventy, sir; reduced from fifty dollars; shall I send them?”

“I—er—I’ll take them with me,” said the engineer, pulling out a roll of bills.

“Women’s hats must be singularly expensive,” he mused for the first time in his professional career, as he strode away down the street, gingerly bearing his late purchase in a pasteboard box. It had not before occurred to Mr. Hickey that mere “feathers” were so costly. He trembled as he reflected upon the ravages committed by his unthinking umbrella. Anyway, these particular plumes were handsome enough to replace the ones he had undoubtedly ruined. He grew eager to behold Miss Tripp’s face under the cerise plumes. But how was this to be brought about? Obviously this new perplexity demanded time for consideration. He carried the plumes home to his boarding-place, therefore, and stored them away on the top shelf of his closet, where they were discovered on the following day by his landlady, who was in the habit of keeping what she was pleased to term “a motherly eye” upon the belongings of her unattached boarders.

“Well, I mus’ say!” exclaimed the worthy Mrs. McAlarney to herself, when her amazed eyes fell upon the contents of the strange box,

purporting to have come from a fashionable milliner's shop; "if that ain't the greatest! Whatever's got into Mr. Hickey?"

But the cerise plumes tarried in undeserved obscurity on the shelf of Mr. Hickey's clothespress for exactly fifteen days thereafter; then they suddenly disappeared.

In the meantime their purchaser continued to indulge in unaccustomed reflections from day to day. He made no effort during all this time to see Miss Tripp; but on the fifteenth day he chanced to meet Sam Brewster as he was about entering the business men's lunch-room, which Mr. Hickey still frequented as in former days.

"Hello, old man!" was Sam's greeting. "Where have you been keeping yourself all these weeks? I thought you'd be around some evening to see us."

"Er—I've been thinking of it," admitted Mr. Hickey cautiously. "Is—er—Mrs. Brewster's friend, Miss Tripp, still with you?"

"No, George; she isn't," Sam told him, enjoying the look of uncontrolled dismay which instantly overspread Mr. Hickey's countenance. "She's gone next door to stay," he added.

"Next door—to—er stay?"

"At the Stanfords' you know. Miss Tripp is keeping house and looking after the young Stanfords while their exhausted parents are endeavouring to recuperate their energies in the far west."

"Hum—ah," quoth Mr. Hickey thoughtfully, his mind reverting casually to the cerise plumes.

"She's doing wonders with those kids, my wife tells me," pursued Sam Brewster artfully. "Miss Tripp's a fine girl and no mistake; it'll be a lucky man who can secure her services for life."

Mr. Hickey offered no comment on this statement, and his friend waved his hand in token of farewell.

"Come around and see us, George, when you haven't anything better to do," he said, as he stepped out to the street.

"Oh—er—I say, Brewster; would it be the proper thing for me to call on Miss Tripp? I—I have a little explanation to make, and——"

"Miss Tripp's mother is chaperoning her," said Sam, with unsmiling gravity. "It would

be, I should say, quite the proper thing for you to call upon her."

"Well; then I think I'd better take those——. Er—Brewster, I wonder if you could enlighten me?—You see it's this way, a—friend of mine called at my office the other day to consult me about a little matter. He said he'd been unfortunate enough to injure a lady's hat—feathers, you know—and he wanted to know what I'd do under like circumstances. 'Well, my dear fellow,' I told him, 'I don't know much about women's head-gear and that sort of thing; but,' I said, 'I should think the square thing to do would be to buy some handsome plumes and send them to the lady—something good and—er—expensive; say forty or fifty dollars.'"

Sam whistled. "Pretty tough advice, unless the fellow happened to have plenty of cash," he hazarded, with a quizzical look at the now flushed and agitated Mr. Hickey.

"Wouldn't they be good enough at that price?" inquired the engineer excitedly. "Ought I—ought my friend to have paid more?"

"I should say that was a fair price," said

Sam mildly. "I don't believe my wife has any feathers of that description on her hats."

Mr. Hickey looked troubled. "Do you think I—er—told my friend the correct thing to do?" he inquired humbly. "Of course I don't know much about—feathers, or anything about women, for that matter."

"That's where you're making a big mistake, Hickey, if you'll allow me to say as much. You ought to marry some nice girl, man, and make her happy. You'd find yourself happier than you have any idea of in the process."

Mr. Hickey shook his head dubiously. "That may be so," he admitted. "I don't doubt it, to tell you the truth; but I——. The fact is, Brewster, I'm too far along in life to think of changing my way of living. I—I'd be afraid to try it, for fear——"

"Oh, nonsense, man! you're just in your prime. Be sure you get the right woman, though; a real home-maker, Hickey; the kind who'll meet you at night with a smile, and have a first-class dinner ready for you three hundred and sixty-five days in the year."

Mr. Hickey stared inscrutably at a passing truck. "Hum—ah!" he ejaculated. "I—

er—dare say you are right, Brewster. Quite so, in fact. I—I'll think it over and let you know—that is, I——”

Sam Brewster turned aside to conceal a passing smile. “The more you think it over the better,” he said convincingly; “only don't take so much time for thinking that the other man'll cut you out.”

“Then there is another man!” exclaimed Mr. Hickey, with some agitation. “I knew it; I felt sure of it. But how could it be otherwise?”

Sam Brewster stared in amazement at the effect produced by his careless speech. “There's always another man, George,” he said seriously—though he felt morally certain there wasn't, if Hickey was referring to Miss Tripp. “But you want to get busy, and not waste time philandering.”

XVI

THE most unthinking observer could scarcely have accused Mr. Hickey of "philandering" up to this point; inasmuch as he had not laid eyes on the object of his thoughts—he would have demurred at a stronger word—for upwards of a month. That same afternoon, however, he left his office at the unwarranted hour of two o'clock, bearing a milliner's box in his hand with unblushing gravity.

It was after he had rung the bell at the Stanford residence that he felt a fresh accession of doubt regarding the cerise plumes. After all, Brewster had neglected to put his mind at ease upon that important point.

Miss Tripp was at home, the maid informed him, and showed him at once into the drawing-room when Miss Tripp herself, charmingly gowned in old rose, presently came in to greet him.

Mr. Hickey caught himself gazing at the subdued tints of her toilet with vague disapproval. It was not, he told himself, a stunning

colour such as was all the rage in Paris, New York and Boston. He felt exceedingly complacent as he thought of the plumes awaiting her acceptance.

"I wonder," Miss Tripp was saying brightly, "if you wouldn't like to see my little kindergarten? To tell you the truth, Mr. Hickey, I shouldn't venture to leave them to themselves, even to talk with you."

She led the way to the library where they were greeted by a chorus of joyous shouts.

"You see," exclaimed Miss Tripp, "I am entertaining all five of the children this afternoon. Elizabeth—Mrs. Brewster—wished to do some shopping, so I offered to keep an interested eye on her three wee lambkins."

"We're playin' birdies, Mr. Hickey," said Doris, taking up the thread of explanation, "Buddy and Baby Stanford are my little birdies; an' I'm the mother bird, an' Carroll an' Robbie are angleworms jus' crawlin' round on the ground. See me hop! Now I'm lookin' for a breakfast for my little birds!"

The two infants in a nest of sofa-pillows set up a loud chirping, while the angleworms writhed realistically on the hearth-rug.

"Now I'm goin' to catch one!" and Doris pounced upon Robbie Stanford. "Course I can't really put him down my birdies' throats," she explained kindly, "I just p'tend; like this."

"Aw—this isn't any fun," protested her victim, as she haled him sturdily across the floor. "You're pullin' my hair, anyway; leg-go, Doris; I ain't no really worm."

"You shouldn't say 'ain't,' dear," admonished Miss Tripp. "You meant to say 'I'm not really a worm.' But I'm sure you've played birdie long enough. We'll do something else now; what shall it be?"

"Let's play reg'lar tea-party with lots an' lots o' things to eat," suggested Master Stanford. "I'm hungry!"

"Oh, no, dear; not yet; you can't be," laughed Miss Tripp. "We'll have a tea-party, though, by and by, and you shall see what a nice surprise Cook Annie has for you."

"I like t' eat better 'n anything; don't you?" asked Doris, sidling up to the observant Mr. Hickey, who was watching the scene with an inscrutable smile. "I like to eat candy out of a big box."

"Doris, dear," interrupted Miss Tripp tact-

fully, "wouldn't you like to look at pictures a little while with the boys? Aunty Evelyn has some pretty books that you haven't seen. Come here, dear, and help Aunty."

"I'm tired o' pictures," objected Doris with a pout. "I want to play train, or somethin' like that; don't you, Robbie?"

"Don't want to play anythin' much; I'm tired o' bein' s' good, 'n' I'd rather go up in the attic, or somewhere," and Master Stanford cast a rebellious glance at his guardian.

"Why don't you let them go out doors for a while," suggested Mr. Hickey, coming unexpectedly to the rescue.

"It's snowing a little; and I'm afraid Elizabeth would think it was pretty cold for Richard," objected Miss Tripp.

"It'll do 'em good," insisted Mr. Hickey, who was selfishly determined to clear the decks for his own personal ends. He had somehow formulated a very surprising set of resolutions as he sat watching Miss Tripp in the discharge of her quasi maternal duties. *Primus*: It was a shame for a sweet, attractive little woman to wear herself out caring for other people's houses and children. *Secundus*: If there was

another man in the case (as Brewster had insinuated) he was determined to find it out without further delay. Tertius: If not——. Mr. Hickey drew a long breath.

“Do you want to go out in the yard a little while?” Miss Tripp was asking the children doubtfully. “It is Norah’s afternoon out,” she explained to Mr. Hickey, “and I don’t like to have them play out of doors unless someone is with them to see that nothing happens. It is such a responsibility,” she added with a little sigh. “I had no idea of it when I undertook it; I’m afraid I shouldn’t have had the courage to——. Oh, children; wait a minute! Let ‘Auntie Evelyn put on your overshoes—Robbie, dear!”

“Come back here, young man!” commanded Mr. Hickey in a voice which effectually arrested the wandering attention of Master Stanford. “Here, I’ll fix ‘em up. If I can’t, I’m not fit to put through another tunnel! Here you, Miss Flutterbudget; is this your coat?”

Miss Tripp flew to the rescue. “Oh, thank you, Mr. Hickey,” she murmured, flashing a mirthful glance of protest at the engineer. “But to array four small children for out of

doors on a winter day is vastly more complicated than digging a tunnel. Wait, Doris; you haven't your mittens."

They were all ready at last, and Evelyn herded them carefully out into the back yard and shut the latticed door leading to the street upon them.

"Now I must watch them every minute from the library window," she said to Mr. Hickey. "You've no idea what astonishing things they'll think of and—do. One ought to have the eyes of an Argus and the arms of a Briareus to cope successfully with Robert."

"Bright boy—very," observed Mr. Hickey absent-mindedly. "I—er—am very fond of boys."

"Oh, are you?" asked Evelyn with mild surprise, as she craned her neck to look out of the window. "I hope they won't make their snowballs too hard. It is really dangerous when the snow is soft."

"—Er—I wish you'd stop looking out of that window, Miss Tripp and—er—give me your attention for about five minutes," said Mr. Hickey, with very much the same tone and manner he would have employed in addressing

his stenographer. He told himself that he was perfectly cool and collected, but unluckily in his efforts to visualise his inward calm he succeeded in looking particularly stern and professional. "I—er—called on a little matter of business this afternoon, Miss Tripp, and I—to put it clearly before you—would like to recall to your mind the day—something like a month ago, when you—when I—er—met you and asked you to lunch with me. You may recall the fact?"

Miss Tripp gazed at Mr. Hickey with some astonishment. Then she blushed, wondering if he had found out that she had prevaricated in the matter of a previous engagement.

"I—remember; yes," she murmured.

"It was a great disappointment to me at the time," he went on. "I wanted to talk to you further. I wanted to—er—tell you——" He paused and stole a glance at the pretty worn profile she turned toward him, as she looked apprehensively out of the window.

"The children are—playing very prettily together," she said. "And, see, the sun has come out."

"You—er—have known me a long time," he

said huskily. "Once you laughed at me because I was homely and—er—awkward, and since then——"

She interrupted him with a little murmur of protest. "I was hoping you had forgotten that," she said softly.

"I have never forgotten anything that you said or did," he declared, with the delightful though sudden conviction that this was strictly true. "It really is singular, when you come to think of it; but it's a fact. I don't know as I should have realised it though if I—if you——"

She started to her feet with a little cry of alarm. "Something has happened to Carroll!" she said. "I must go out and see."

He followed her distracted flight with the grim resolve not to be balked of his purpose.

"Oh! what is it?" she was asking wildly of the other children, who huddled crying about the small figure of Carroll which was flattened against the iron fence, emitting strange and dolorous sounds of woe.

"Aw—I tol' Carroll he didn't das' to put his tongue out on th' iron fence; an' he did it; an' now he's stuck to it, 'n' can't get away," ex-

plained Master Stanford with scientific accuracy. "I don't see why; do you?"

"Oh, you poor darling! What shall I do; can't you——"

"Ah-a-a-a!" howled the victim, writhing in misery.

"Hold on there, youngster!" shouted Mr. Hickey, whose experienced eye had taken in the situation at a glance. "Wait till I get some hot water; don't move, boys! Don't touch him, Evelyn!"

It was the work of several moments to successfully detach the rash experimenter from his uncomfortable proximity to the iron fence. But Mr. Hickey accomplished the feat, with a patience and firmness which won for him the loud encomiums of Mrs. Stanford's Irish Annie, who came out bare-armed to assist in the operation.

"Oh, you're the bad boy entirely!" she said to Robbie, who stared open-mouthed at the scene from the safe vantage ground of the back stoop. "Many's the time I've towld what would happen to yez if you put yer tongue t' th' fence in cowl'd weather."

"I wanted to see if it was true," said Master Stanford coolly. "You said th' was a

p'liceman comin' after me, an' th' wasn't, when I ate the frostin' off your ol' cake."

"If your mother was here she'd be afther takin' th' paddle to yez," said Annie wrathfully. "I've a mind to do it meself."

Master Stanford fled to the safe shelter of the library where Carroll, ensconced on Mr. Hickey's knee, was being soothed with various emollients and lotions at the hands of Miss Tripp.

"I should never have known what to do," she said, looking up from her ministrations to find Mr. Hickey's eyes fixed full upon her. "How could you think so quickly?"

"Because I tried it myself once upon a time," said Mr. Hickey. "It's about the only way to learn things," he added somewhat grimly. "But I wish our young friend had taken another day for improving his knowledge on the subject of the prehensile powers of iron when applied to a moist surface on a cold day."

For some reason or other he felt very much neglected and correspondingly out of temper as Miss Tripp ministered to the numerous wants of her small charges during the half hour that followed. To be sure she poured him

a cup of tea (which he detested) and pressed small frosted cakes upon him with the sweetest of abstracted smiles.

“I must go at once,” he bethought himself, as he refused a second cup. “I—er—shall be late to my dinner.” But he lingered gloomily while she cheered the afflicted Carroll with warm milk well sweetened with sugar.

“You’ll find some—some feathers in a box in the hall,” he informed her, when he finally took his leave. “I wanted to tell you that I—er—regretted exceedingly that I had injured yours with my umbrella on the day we were to have lunched together and—didn’t.”

Miss Tripp took the cerise plumes out of their wrappings and examined them in the blissful security of her own room—this after the Brewster children had gone home and the Stanford children were at last in bed and safely asleep.

“How—extraordinary!” she murmured, her cheeks reflecting palely the vivid tints of the latest importation from Paris.

XVII

HAVING definitely abandoned the unthinking, hit-or-miss method of child discipline practised by the generality of parents, Elizabeth Brewster and her husband found themselves facing a variety of problems. To be exact, there were three of them; Carroll, with his somewhat timid and yielding, yet too self-conscious nature; Doris, hot-tempered, generous and loving, and baby Richard, who already exhibited an adamant firmness of purpose, which a careless observer might have termed stubbornness. There was another questionable issue which these wide-awake young parents were obliged to face, and that was the entirely unconfessed partiality which Elizabeth cherished for her first-born son and the equally patent yet unacknowledged "particular affection" Sam felt for his one small daughter. More than once in the past the two had found themselves at the point of serious disagreement when the boy and girl had come into collision; Sam hotly—too hotly—upholding the cause of Doris, while Eliza-

beth was almost tearfully sure that her son had not been in fault. Neither had taken the pains to trace these quite human and natural predilections to their source; but they were agreed in thinking the outcome unsafe. They determined, therefore, to defer to the other's judgment in those instances when special discipline appeared to be demanded by either child.

All this by way of prelude to a certain stormy evening in March when Sam Brewster, returning more tired than usual from a long day of hard work in his office, found his Elizabeth with reddened eyelids and a general appearance of carefully subdued emotion.

"Well! I say," he began, as he divested himself of his wet coat and kicked off his overshoes with an air bordering on impatience; "it's beastly weather outside; hope none of it's got inside. Where are the kiddies? And what is the matter with the lady of the house?"

Elizabeth plucked up a small, faint smile which she bestowed upon the questioner with a wifely kiss.

"I've had a very trying time with Doris to-day," she said; "but I didn't mean to mention it till after dinner."

Sam shrugged his shoulders. "I shall at least have to change part of my clothes, my dear," he said crisply. "I'll hear the catalogue of the young lady's crimes when I'm dry, if you don't mind."

The dinner was excellent, and there was a salad and a pudding which elicited the warmest commendation from the head of the house. He was aware, however, of an unbending attitude of mind upon the part of Elizabeth and an unnatural decorum in the conduct of the children which somewhat marred the general enjoyment. Sam eyed his small daughter quizzically from time to time, as she sat with eyes bent upon her plate.

"Well," he said at last, in his usual half-joking manner, "I hear there have been ructions in this ranch since I left home this morning. What have you been doing, Dorry, to make your mother look like the old lady who makes vinegar for a living?"

The little girl giggled as she stole a glance at her mother's face; then she ran quickly to her father's side and nestled her hand in his. "I'm always good when you're here, daddy," she said in a loud, buzzing whisper. "I wish

you stayed at home all th' time 'stead of mother."

Elizabeth bit her lip with vexation, and Sam laughed aloud, his eyes filled with a teasing light.

"That appears to be a counter indictment for you, Betty," he said. "Or—we might call it a demurrer—eh? Come, tell me what's happened to disturb the family peace. I see it's broken all to bits."

Elizabeth arose with unsmiling dignity. "Celia would like to clear the table," she said; "I think we had better go into the sitting-room."

She did not offer either accusation or explanation after they were all seated about the blazing wood fire, which the Brewsters were agreed in terming their one extravagance; for a few moments no one spoke.

"I really hate to go into this matter of naughty deeds just now," began Sam, stretching his slippered feet to the warmth with an air of extreme comfort. "Couldn't we—er—quash the proceedings; or—— See here, I'll tell you; suppose we issue an injunction and bind over all young persons in this house to

keep the peace. Well, now, won't that do, Betty?"

"I'm really afraid it won't, Sam," said Elizabeth firmly. "I didn't punish Doris for what she did this afternoon. It seemed to me that it would be better for her to tell you about it herself. Something ought to be done to prevent it from happening again; perhaps you will know what that something is."

Her face was grave, and she did not choose to meet the twinkle in her husband's eyes.

He lifted his daughter to his knee. "It's up to you, Dorry," he said; "I'm all attention. Come, out with it. Tell daddy all about it."

He passed his hand caressingly over her mane of silken hair and bent his tall head to look into her abashed eyes.

Thus encouraged the little girl nestled back into the circle of the strong arms which held her, dimpling with anticipated triumph.

"I was playin' mother," she began, "an' Carroll was my husban', an' Baby Dick was my child. An'—an' Dick was naughty. He wouldn't mind me when I told him to stop playin' with his cars an' come to mother. I spoke real kind an' gentle, too: 'Put down

your train an' come to mother, darlin',' I said. But he jus' wouldn't, daddy. He said, 'No; I won't!' jus' like that he said."

"Hum!" commented her father. "And what did you do then?"

"Well, you see, daddy, I was p'tendin' I was Mrs. Stanford; so 'course I was 'bliged to punish Dick for not mindin'. I got mother's butter-paddle an' I whipped him real hard, an' I said 'it hurts mother more 'n it hurts you, darlin'!' Robbie says that's what his mother says when she whips him. He says he don't b'lieve it. But Dick wasn't good after I whipped him. He jus' turned 'round an' pulled my hair an' screamed—with both han's he pulled it an' jerked it; then I—I bit him."

"You—*what*, Doris?"

"I bit him, jus' to make him let go. An'—an' he was softer'n I thought he was. I never knew such a soft baby."

The little girl hung her head before her father's stern look; her voice threatened to break in a sob. "I didn't think—Dick—was—so—so full of—juice," she quavered.

"Did you really bite your dear little brother till the blood came, Doris? I can't believe it!"

180 Those Brewster Children

Sam glanced inquiringly at his wife; but she held her peace, her eyes drooped upon the sewing in her hands.

“I—I didn’t b’lieve it either—at first,” Doris said quickly. “I thought it was jus’—red paint.”

“Why, Doris Brewster!” piped up Carroll, unable to contain himself longer; “that’s a reg’lar fib!”

“Had Dick been playing with red paint?” interrogated Sam gravely, his eyes fixed upon the culprit who was beginning to fidget uneasily in his arms.

“N-o, daddy,” confessed the child in a whisper.

Her father considered her answer in silence for a moment or two; then he looked over at his wife.

“Elizabeth,” he said. “Isn’t it time for these young persons to go to bed?”

She glanced up at the clock. “I think it is, dear,” she replied. “But——”

He checked her with a quick look. “I shall have to think this over,” he said, setting Doris upon her feet. Then he put his arm about his son and kissed him. “Good-night, Carroll.”

Doris, dimpling and rosy, lifted her eager little face to her father's; but he deliberately put her aside.

"Aren't you going to kiss me, too, daddy?" wailed the child, in a sudden passion of affection and something akin to fear. "I love you, daddy!"

"I'm a little afraid of you, Dorry," her father said gravely. "I'm not sure that you are entirely safe to—kiss."

"But I wouldn't bite you, daddy! I *wouldn't!*"

"Why wouldn't you?"

"Because I—because I love you."

"I always supposed you loved Baby Dick," said her father, turning away from the piteous, grieved look in her eyes; "but it seems I was mistaken."

"But, daddy, I do! I do love Dick! I love him more'n a million, an'——"

"Good-night, Doris." There was stern finality in Sam's voice, though his eyes were wet.

Elizabeth led the two children away, Doris shaken with sobs and Carroll casting backward glances of troubled awe at his father who continued to look steadily into the fire.

He still sat in his big chair, his face more sober and thoughtful than its wont, when his wife returned.

"I'm afraid Doris will cry herself to sleep to-night," she said doubtfully.

He made no reply.

"You wouldn't like to go up and kiss her good-night, Sam?"

"Better one night than a hundred," he said, ignoring her suggestion. Then he bent forward and poked the fire with unnecessary violence. "Poor little girl," he murmured.

A light broke over her face. "Do you think this is the natural penalty?" she asked.

A wailing sob floated down to them from above in the silence that followed her question.

"It was, perhaps, one of the penalties sure to follow a similar line of conduct," he said slowly. "She'll remember it, you'll find, better than one of Mrs. Stanford's whippings."

He turned to look at his wife with a smile. "'It hurts mother more than it does you, darling!'" he quoted with a grimace. "I thought that particular sort of cant was out of date. An irascible person who flies into a rage and frankly administers punishment on

the spot I can understand. I used to get a thrashing of that sort about once in so often from Aunt Julia; and I don't remember hating her for it. Where did Marian dig up such rank nonsense?"

"At her 'Mothers' Club,' I suppose," Elizabeth told him with a disdainful curl of her pretty lips. "I went once and heard a woman say that she always prayed with her child first and whipped him severely afterward."

"Beastly cant!" groaned Sam disgustedly. "I'm glad you don't go in for that sort of thing, Betty."

"It would drive me to almost anything, if I were a child and had to endure it," Elizabeth said positively.

Both parents were silent for a long minute, and both appeared to be listening for the sound of muffled sobbing from above stairs.

"You — you'll forgive her — to-morrow; won't you, Sam?" whispered Elizabeth.

"Forgive her?" he echoed. "You know I'm not really angry with her, Betty; but if we can teach our small daughter through her affections to control her passions, can't you see what it will do for the child? Perhaps," he

added under his breath, "that is what—God—does with us. Sometimes—we are allowed to suffer. I have been, and—I know I have profited by it."

Sam Brewster was not one of those who talk over-familiarly of their Maker. A word like this meant that he was profoundly moved. Elizabeth's eyes dwelt on her husband with a trust and affection which spoke louder than words. After a while she laid her hand in his.

"If you would always advise me with the children," she murmured, "I'm sure we could—help them to be good."

"That is it, Betty," he said, meeting her misty look with a smile. "We cannot force our children into goodness, or torture them into wisdom—even if we can compel them to a show of submission which they would make haste to throw off when they are grown. But we can help them to choose the good, now and as long as we live. And we'll do it, little mother; for I'm not going to shirk my part of it in the future. As you said long ago, it's the most important thing in the world for us to do just now."

XVIII

PERHAPS because she had cried herself to sleep the night before, Doris awakened late the next morning to find Carroll at her bedside completely dressed and with the shining morning face which follows prolonged scrubbing with soap and water.

"Has daddy gone?" she inquired anxiously, as she rubbed the dreams out of her brown eyes.

"Not yet, sleepy-head," Carroll informed her; "but he's puttin' on his overcoat this minute an' kissin' mother good-bye. I got up early," he added complacently, "an' dressed myself all by my lone an' had my breakfas' with daddy. I'm goin' to do it every mornin' after this. He likes to have me."

Sam Brewster, in the act of bestowing a final hasty kiss upon his Elizabeth's flushed cheek, was startled by the sight of a small figure in white with a cloud of bright hair which flew down the stairs and into his arms with a loud wail of protest.

"Kiss me good-bye, too, daddy! Kiss me!"

Sam caught the little warm, throbbing body and held it close. "Father's baby daughter," he whispered, bending his head to her pink ear. "She shall kiss her daddy good-bye."

"I'm goin' to be jus' as good to-day, daddy; I'm goin' to be gooder 'an Carroll. 'N'—'n' I'll never, never bite anybody again; never in my world. I promise!"

Sam gazed fondly down at the sparkling little face against his breast. "That's daddy's good girl!" he exclaimed heartily. "Do you hear that, mother?"

"Yes; I hear," Elizabeth said doubtfully. "I'm sure I hope Doris will remember. Sometimes you forget so quickly, dear."

"We all do that, Betty," Sam said gravely, as he surrendered the child to her mother.

His face was thoughtful as he hurried away down the street to catch his car. To his surprise his friend Stanford swung himself aboard at the next corner.

"Why, hello, Stanford," he looked up from a hurried perusal of his paper to say. "I didn't know you were home. When did you come?"

“Last night,” said the other, dropping into a seat beside his neighbour. “The fact is, Marian couldn’t stand it to be away from the children another day. She was sure Rob would burn the house down with everything in it, including the baby; or that some equally heartrending thing would happen—it was a fresh one every day. It got on her nerves, as she puts it; and finally on mine; so we gave up our trip to Santa Barbara and came home literally post-haste. I was sorry, for I don’t know when we shall get another such chance. But you know how it is, Brewster; a woman won’t listen to rhyme or reason where her children are concerned.”

“I understand,” Sam agreed briefly; “my wife is the same way. But of course you found everything in good order—eh? Miss Tripp appeared to be all devotion to the children, and my wife kept a motherly eye on them.”

“Oh, everything was all right, of course; just as I told Marian it would be: the children were in bed and asleep and everything about the place in perfect trim. I’m sure we’re a thousand times obliged to you and

Mrs. Brewster; Marian will tell you so. Er—by the way, our mutual friend Hickey appeared to be calling upon Miss Tripp when we arrived, and Marian insists that we interrupted some sort of important interview by our untimely appearance. She said she felt it in the air. I laughed at her. Of course I know as well as you do that Old Ironsides isn't matrimonially inclined, and while Miss Tripp may be an excellent nurse and housekeeper, she isn't exactly——”

“H'm!” commented Sam non-committally, “there's no accounting for tastes, you know. Hickey's a queer chap; queer as Dick's hat-band; but a good sort—an all-round, square good fellow.”

“Sure! I believe you. But I had to laugh at my boy Robert. He's all ears, and smarter than a steel trap. He overheard something of what my wife was saying to me. ‘Mr. Hickey doesn't come to see Miss Tripp,’ he puts in, as large as life; ‘he comes to see me an' baby, 'specially me; he comes most every day, an' he brings us candy an' oranges.’ Isn't that rather singular—eh?”

“Not at all,” Sam assured him warmly;

"Hickey is very fond of children, always has been. He's always dropping in to see Carroll and Doris. Um—did you see this account of Judge Lindsay's doings in his children's court? I've come across a number of articles about his work lately. Seems to me it's mighty suggestive, the way he's gone to work to make good citizens out of material which would otherwise fill the state prisons; and it's all done through some sort of moral suasion apparently. He gets into sympathy with those poor little chaps; climbs down to their level, somehow or other; sees things through their eyes; gets their point of view, and then deals with them as man to man—or boy to boy. I believe he's got the matter of discipline—all sorts of discipline—cinched. We're going to try some of his methods with our children."

Young Stanford stared for a moment at his neighbour, then he threw back his head and chuckled.

"I beg your pardon, Brewster," he exclaimed; "but it struck me as being—er—a decidedly original idea, that of establishing a children's court in your own home. Perhaps it was Mrs. Brewster's notion; Marian tells me she's very

—er—advanced, when it comes to disciplining the children.”

Sam Brewster’s blue eyes rested steadily upon his neighbour.

“Singular as the statement may sound, I’m prepared to say that I’m somewhat interested in my children’s upbringing on my own account,” he said coolly. “My wife has notions, as you call them, and one of them is that a father has quite as much responsibility in the training of the children as the mother. I believe she’s right.”

“Well, I can’t see it that way,” drawled Stanford. “I’m perfectly willing to leave the kids to Marian while they’re small; when they’re too big for her to handle I’ll take ’em in hand. They’ll obey *me*, you’d better believe, from the word go. I think as my father did, that a child ought to mind as though he were fired out of a gun.”

“It seems to me a child is a reasonable being, and has a reasoning being’s right to understand something of the whys and wherefores of his obedience,” protested Sam, vaguely aware that he was quoting the opinions of someone else. “Besides that, don’t they tell

us a child's character is pretty well formed by the time he is seven?"

"Bosh!" exploded Stanford. "I wouldn't give a brass nickel for all the theories you can bundle together. There were no sort of explanations or mollycoddling coming to me, when I was a kid. It was 'do this, sir'; or 'don't do the other.' I can tell you, I walked a chalk-line till I was sixteen. Why, gracious! if I'd attempted to argue and talk back to my governor the way your boy talks to you—you needn't deny it, for I've heard him myself—I'd have stood up to eat for a week. I've done it more than once for simply looking cross-eyed, and I can tell you it did me good."

Sam Brewster eyed his companion with grave interest; there was no animosity in his tone and merely a friendly interest in his face as he inquired:

"You walked a chalk-line till you were sixteen, you say; what did you do then?"

Young Stanford's handsome dark face reddened slightly.

"I—er—well, you see I got red-hot at the pater one day because he—you see I'd grown pretty fast and was as tall as he was, and

—er—I balked; thought I was too big to be thrashed, as I deserved. Why, you know what I did as well as I do, Sam. I've always been ashamed of it, of course, and of the trouble I made my mother. She was and is the best mother ever, mild and sweet-tempered; but she couldn't handle *me*. Why, man, I was a holy terror, and my boy Rob is exactly like me." He spoke complacently, almost triumphantly. "I'll take it out of him, though. Watch me!"

"Then you don't think we could both learn a thing or two from Judge Lindsay and other specialists about the way to manage and bring up our boys?" persisted Sam, a slow twinkle dawning in his blue eyes. "We know it all—eh? and don't require any enlightenment?"

"I know enough to bring up my own boy, I should hope," responded Stanford, with heat. "If he cuts up the way I did, I'll take it out of his young hide some day; that's a sure proposition."

"And then possibly, since he's so much like his father, he might balk—when he gets tall enough—and he might not—come back in three days, the way you did. Pardon me, old man,

for speaking so plainly; but as long as our children play together and go to school together, your business and mine are one when it comes to their training. And if half the rich men in the country can afford to spend most of their time and millions of their dollars in improving the horses, cattle, pigs and poultry of the country, you and I won't be exactly wasting our time if we discuss child improvement occasionally."

"That's where you're off, Brewster; the discipline of a man's own children is a strictly private and personal matter. You'll excuse me if I say just what I think, and that is that the methods I adopt with my boy are none of your or any man's business."

"And I'm obliged to differ with you there; the way you bring up your boy is not only my business but everybody's business. It concerns the neighbourhood, the state, the nation and the world."

"Now you're ranting, my boy, and I can't listen to you. But I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll tell Mrs. Stanford to get us both invitations to attend the next of her 'mother's meetings.' I'll go, if you will, and we'll hold

forth on our respective ideas at length. How does that strike you?"

"As an eminently sensible and sane proposition," Sam said coolly, as he rose to leave the car. "A parent's club—eh? A capital idea; well worth working up. I'll see you later with regard to it."

Stanford grinned derisively as he buried himself in the pages of his newspaper. "Brewster's getting to be a bally crank," he told himself. Then his eye fastened upon a paragraph heading with a reminiscent thrill. "Boy of fifteen runs away from home in company with a neighbour's son, after a disagreement with his father!"

His rapid eye took in the details, meagre and commonplace, of the missing lads and their home-life.

"Young rascals!" he muttered, and passed on to the political situation in which he was deeply interested. Curiously enough, though, that paragraph concerning the runaway boys recurred to his mind more than once during the day, bringing with it an unwontedly poignant recollection of his own headlong flight and ignominious home-coming, foot-sore and hun-

gry after three days of wretched wandering. He had never forgotten the experience and never would. It had done him a world of good, he had since declared stoutly. But he shivered at the thought of his own son alone and hungry in the streets of a great city.

XIX

ELIZABETH was quite as busy as usual looking after the interests of her small kingdom when Evelyn Tripp called that same morning.

"I have come," she said, "to say good-bye." Then in answer to Elizabeth's look of surprised enquiry, "The Stanfords came home quite unexpectedly last evening, so I shall return to Dorchester this afternoon. Mother has already gone; I've just been to the train with her."

Elizabeth surveyed her friend dubiously. "Perhaps you are not altogether sorry on the whole," she said, "though the children have behaved surprisingly well—for them."

"The baby is a dear," agreed Miss Tripp warmly; "but I'm afraid I didn't succeed very well with Robert. It seems to me the child's finer feelings have been blunted someway. When I spoke seriously to him about his unkindness to Carroll the other day, he made up a face at me. 'You can't whip me,' he said, 'cause you aren't my mother.'

“‘Indeed I could whip, or hurt you in some other way, if I chose,’ I told him, ‘and if you were a stupid little donkey who wouldn’t go, or a dog who couldn’t be made to obey, I should certainly feel like switching you; but you are a boy, and you are fast growing to be a man. I am afraid, though, that you are not growing to be a gentleman.’”

“‘I guess I’m a gentleman, too,’ he said rudely. ‘My grandfather’s a rich man, an’ we’re goin’ to have all his money when he dies. We ain’t poor like you.’”

“Shocking!” exclaimed Elizabeth; “what did you say to the child?”

“I explained to him what a gentle-man really was; then I told him about the knights of the Round Table. He is not really a bad child, Elizabeth; but he will be, if—— I wonder if I might venture to talk plainly to his mother?”

“You may talk and she will listen, quite without impatience,” Elizabeth said, with a shrug of her shoulders. “But Marian is somewhat— opinionated, to put it mildly, and she is very, very sure that her own way is best. So I’m afraid it wouldn’t do any good.”

She smiled speculatively as she looked at her

friend. It seemed to her that Evelyn was looking particularly young and pretty. There was a faint flush of colour in her pale cheeks and her eyes shone girlishly bright under their curtain of thick brown lashes. A sudden thought crossed Elizabeth's mind. And without pausing to think, she put it into words.

"Evelyn," she began, her own cheeks glowing, "I want you to stay with us over night; I really can't let you go off so suddenly, without saying good-bye to—to Sam, or—anybody," she finished lamely. "You must stay to dinner, anyway; I insist upon that much, and I will send you to the station in a cab."

Evelyn shook her head. "It is very good of you, Betty," she said; "but I really must go this afternoon. Mother will expect me."

"Does—Mr. Hickey know you are going?" demanded Elizabeth, abandoning her feeble efforts at finesse.

The faint colour in Evelyn's cheeks deepened to a painful scarlet. She met Elizabeth's questioning gaze bravely.

"No—o," she hesitated; "but——"

She paused, apparently to straighten out with care the fingers of her shabby little gloves; then

she looked up, a spark of defiance in her blue eyes.

"Elizabeth," she said, "I think I ought to tell you that Mr. Hickey has asked me to marry him; but I——"

"Oh, Evelyn! How glad I am!"

"I refused him," said Miss Tripp concisely.

"Refused him! but why? Sam thinks him one of the finest men he knows, kind, good as gold, and very successful in his profession. You would be so comfortable, Evelyn, and all your problems solved."

Miss Tripp arose. She was looking both defiant and unhappy now, but prettier withal than Elizabeth had ever seen her.

"I don't want to be *comfortable*, as you call it, Betty," she said passionately. "I—I want—to be *loved*. If he had even pretended to—like me, even a little. But I—I had told him all about my perplexities, I'm sure I can't imagine why—except that I pined for something—sympathy, I thought it was, and he—offered me—money. Think of it, Elizabeth! And when I refused, he—offered to marry me. He said he could make me—comfortable!"

Her voice choked a little over the last word.

"Of course," she went on, "I know I'm not young and pretty any more; but—but I—couldn't marry a man who was just sorry for me, as one would be sorry for a forlorn, lost ki-kitten!"

"He does love you, Evelyn; I'm sure he does," Elizabeth said convincingly. "Only he—doesn't know how to say so. If I could only——"

Miss Tripp looked up out of the damp folds of her handkerchief.

"If you should repeat to Mr. Hickey anything I have told you in confidence, Elizabeth, I think I should die of shame," she quavered. "Promise me—promise me you won't speak of it to anyone!"

Elizabeth promised at once, with an inward reservation in favour of Sam, who could, she was sure, bring order out of this sudden and unexpected chaos in her friend's affairs.

"I am positive that you are mistaken, Evelyn," she repeated, as she embraced and kissed her friend at parting. "I wish you would change your mind."

But Evelyn shook her head with the gentle obstinacy which Elizabeth remembered of old.

"I seldom change my mind about anything," she said; "and in this case I simply couldn't. Good-bye dear, dear Betty; and thank you a thousand times for all your kindness to me."

She turned to wave a slim hand to Elizabeth, who stood watching her departure with a curious mingling of exasperation and regret.

A whiff of familiar perfume greeted her upon re-entering the sitting-room and her eyes fell at once upon Evelyn's muff, which she had deposited upon the floor beside her chair and quite evidently forgotten. It was a handsome muff of dark mink, a relic of Evelyn's more fortunate days. Elizabeth stood caressing it absent-mindedly, wondering how she could best restore it to its owner without vexatious delay, when her eyes fell upon Carroll and Doris coming in at the front gate with joyous hops, skips and jumps indicative of the rapture of release from school.

"Here, dears!" she exclaimed, "Aunt Evelyn has just gone, and she has left her muff; take it and run after her; then come directly home. Your lunch will be ready in fifteen minutes."

XX

ALL that Evelyn Tripp had said to Elizabeth was entirely true; her feelings had been hurt—outraged, she again assured herself, as she hurried away, her eyes blurred with tears of anger and self-pity. Yet deep down in her heart she felt sure that George Hickey loved her for herself alone, and that all was not over between them. She had refused him, to be sure, and in no uncertain terms; but that he was not a man to be daunted by difficulties, she remembered with a little thrill of satisfaction. All had not been said when their interview was terminated by the unlooked-for arrival of the Stanfords; and he had said at parting, “I must see you again—soon. I wish to—explain. I will come to-morrow.”

He would come; she was sure of it, and as she pictured his vexed astonishment at finding her already gone, her eyes filled with fresh tears. “He doesn’t even know my Dorchester ad-

dress," she murmured with inconsistent regret. She was so absorbed in her thoughts that she did not hear a masterful step on the sidewalk behind her; but at the sound of his voice she glanced up without the least surprise. It appeared to Evelyn that Mr. Hickey's presence at that particular instant was in full accord with the verities.

"I was afraid you might be leaving early," he said directly, his eyes searching her face with an open anxiety that filled her with a warm delight. "I—er—found that I could not apply myself to business as I should this morning, so I thought best to—er—see you without delay."

Evelyn's head dropped; a faint smile flitted about her lips.

"Indeed, I am just leaving this afternoon," she said, in a voice that trembled a little in spite of her efforts to preserve an easy society manner.

"And you were going without—letting me know," said Mr. Hickey, in the tone of one who derives an unpleasant deduction from an undeniable fact. He looked down at her suddenly. "Did you, or did you not intend giv-

ing me the chance to—er—continue our conversation of last evening?” he asked with delightful sternness.

She was sure now that he loved her; but her day had been long in coming and she could not resist the temptation to enjoy it slowly, lingeringly, as one tastes an anticipated feast.

“I thought,” she murmured indistinctly, “that there was nothing more to—say.” She was deliciously frightened by the look that came into his deep-set eyes.

“I asked you to marry me,” he said deliberately, “and you—refused. I want to know your reasons. I must know them. I am not in the habit of giving up what I want, easily,” he went on, his brows meeting in a short-sighted frown, which raised Evelyn to the seventh heaven of anticipated bliss. “I’ve always gotten what I wanted—sooner or later. I want—you, Evelyn, and—and it’s getting late. I’m forty-two, and you——”

She blushed resentfully, for at that moment she felt twenty, no older. Nevertheless, something in her downcast face must have encouraged him.

“Won’t you take pity on me, dear?” he entreated. “I’m old and ugly to look at, I know; but I *want you*, Evelyn.”

She would have answered him then; the words trembled upon her lips.

“Aunty Evelyn! Aunty Evelyn!”

The two shrill little voices upraised in urgent unison pierced the confused maze of her thoughts. She looked around, not without a wilful sense of relief to see the two older Brewster children running toward her brandishing a muff, which she presently recognised as one of her own cherished possessions, unmissed as yet since her brief visit with Elizabeth.

“Mother found it on the floor after you’d gone, an’ she said for us to run after you an’ give it to you,” Carroll began, with a large sense of his own importance. “Doris wanted to carry it; but I was ’fraid she’d drop it in the wet. I didn’t drop it, Aunty Evelyn; but Doris threw some snow at me, an’ it got on the muff, an’ I stopped to brush it off. I thought we’d never catch up.”

Doris had snuggled her small person between Mr. Hickey and Miss Tripp, where she appro-

priated a hand of each in a friendly and impartial way.

"I guess girls know how to carry muffs better'n boys," she observed calmly. "Carroll was too fresh; that is why I threw snow at him."

"Why, Doris dear, where did you ever learn such an expression?" murmured Miss Tripp, vaguely reproving.

Doris gazed up at her mentor with an expression of preternatural intelligence.

"Why, don't you know," she explained; "folks is too fresh when they make you mad, an' make you cry. Who made you cry, Aunt Evelyn? Did Mr. Hickey?"

"I wish you'd find out for me, Doris," said that gentleman gloomily. "I'd give anything to know."

Miss Tripp gazed about her with gentle distraction, as if in search of an entirely suitable remark with which to continue the difficult conversation. Finding no inspiration in the expanse of slushy street, or in the dull houses which bordered it on either side, she turned bravely to Mr. Hickey.

"I think," she said in a low voice, "that the

children really ought to go home to—to—their luncheon.”

Her eyes (quite unknown to herself) held an appeal which filled him with unreasoning satisfaction.

“You are entirely right,” he agreed joyfully; “the children should go home immediately. They must be in need of food. Go home, children, at once. You are hungry—very hungry.”

“Oh, no, we’re not,” warbled Doris. “An’ we like to walk with you an’ Auntie Evelyn. Mother said our lunch wouldn’t be ready for fifteen minutes. We won’t have to go home for quite a while yet.”

At this Mr. Hickey laughed, more loudly than the humour of the situation appeared to demand. “Very good,” he said firmly; “that being the case, I’ll say at once what I had in mind without further delay; for I’m anxious to let the whole world know that I love you, Evelyn, and I hope you’ll allow me to go on loving you as long as I live.”

The events which followed immediately upon this bold statement Elizabeth learned as a result of her somewhat bewildered questionings, when her two children, breathless and excited

from a competitive return, flung their small persons upon her at their own door.

"Now you just let me tell, Carroll Brewster, 'cause I got here first; Auntie Evelyn said——"

"We gave Auntie Evelyn her muff," said Carroll, taking unfair advantage of Doris' breathless condition. "And what do you think, mother, Doris said I was too fresh to Auntie Evelyn, and she said——"

"Auntie Evelyn cried when we gave her the muff, an' she said——"

"Auntie Evelyn didn't cry 'cause we gave her the muff," interpolated Carroll, with superior sagacity. "She was cryin' to Mr. Hickey, an' he said——"

"He said he'd give me most anythin'—a great big doll with real hair or a gold ring, or anythin' at all if I'd find out why Auntie Evelyn was cryin'."

"But, Doris dear, Mr. Hickey wasn't with Auntie Evelyn; was he?" asked Elizabeth, a fine mingling of reproof and eager curiosity flushing her young face.

"Mr. Hickey didn't say a big doll with real hair, or a gold ring," Carroll interrupted in-

dignantly. "You just made up that part, Doris."

"I didn't make it up either; I thought it," retorted Doris. "He said he'd give me anythin' at all, an' I guess a great big doll with real hair is anythin'. So there!"

"I don't understand, children," murmured the smiling Elizabeth, who was beginning to understand very well, indeed. "You should have come home at once, instead of stopping to talk to Aunty Evelyn. Your luncheon is waiting."

"That's what 'Aunty Evelyn said," put in Carroll reproachfully, "an' Mr. Hickey said 'Go home at once, children; you're very hungry.' An' I was going; but Doris, she wouldn't go. She——"

"I wasn't a bit hungry then; but I am now, an' I smell somethin' good," observed that young lady, sniffing delicately.

"She said she wasn't in any hurry, an' I guess Mr. Hickey didn't like it. Anyway he laughed, an' he took right hold of 'Aunty Evelyn's hand, an' she cried some more."

"She didn't cry 'cause he squeezed her hand. She said 'I thought you didn't really like me.'"

'An' Mr. Hickey——. Now don't int'rupt, Carroll; it's rude to int'rupt; isn't it, mother? Mr. Hickey said 'Yes, I do too!' Jus' like that he conterdicted."

"An' then Doris said, 'it's rude to conterdict,' right out to Mr. Hickey she said. That was an awful imp'lite thing for Doris to say; wasn't it, mother? I said it was."

"But Aunt Evelyn said *sometimes* it wasn't rude to conterdict. An'——n' she said she was glad Mr. Hickey conterdicted; 'cause she was 'fraid he wasn't goin' to; an' then——"

"She told us to run along home an' tell our mother she was very much mistaken this mornin'."

"No; she said to say our mother was perfec'ly right, an' she was——"

"Well, that's jus' exac'ly what I said. What did Aunt Evelyn mean, mother? An' why did Mr. Hickey make her cry?"

Elizabeth wiped a laughing tear or two from her own eyes. "I'm glad Aunt Evelyn found out that I was right," was all she said. "Now come, children, and let mother wash your hands. Celia has baked a beautiful gingerbread man for Carroll's lunch and a beautiful

gingerbread lady for Doris and a cunning little gingerbread baby for Baby Dick."

"Oh, goody! goody!" shouted the children in ecstatic chorus.

In a trice their singular encounter with Aunt Evelyn and Mr. Hickey was forgotten in eager contemplation of the more obvious and immediate future of the gingerbread man, the gingerbread lady and the gingerbread child; each of whom, plump and shining, reposed in the middle of a pink china plate, their black currant eyes widely opened upon destiny.

AFTERWORD

It will be easily perceived by the intelligent reader that there really isn't any end to this story. The chronicler is forced to leave the problems of the Brewster parents unsolved in many details, while the Brewster children, in company with the present generation of young Americans, are still growing up;—growing up, it is devoutly to be hoped, into better men and women than their parents. Stronger physically, more alert mentally, of clearer vision; better fitted to carry the world's burdens and direct the world's activities. Unless the Brewsters accomplish this much for their children they have failed in the greatest thing given them to do; for it is not more wealth, better houses, finer raiment that the world is crying out for, but better, healthier and more inspired men and women. And, clearly, it rests with the fathers and mothers as to whether their children shall reach this higher level toward which humanity weakly struggles with tears and groans. Is

love and brotherhood to rule in a world wherein all the finer qualities of mind and heart find room to grow and flourish? Or is humanity to go on its old, old weary way, hating and being hated; the strong trampling the weak under foot; the child often suffering from ignorance and injustice—even in its own home; and growing up to carry on the same false ideas.

There is much to be said on both sides of this question of child government, and the writer of this little tale does not even pretend to have said the last word. But let this much be remembered: "Spare the rod and spoil the child," was spoken in the days when polygamy and concubinage were the rule in the home. "Folly is bound up in the heart of the child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him," was the dictum of an age whose customs would not be tolerated in these days of higher civilisation and more illumined vision. The rack and the thumb-screw, the gag, the branding-iron and the scourge have passed; we shiver at the mere mention of the tortures inflicted upon human flesh in those past ages of darkness; yet "the rod of correction" is still tolerated—nay, even complacently advocated

214 Those Brewster Children

in our homes, though it has been routed from our schools. Isn't it out of date? Doesn't it belong in the museums with those ancient and rust-eaten instruments of torture?

Listen to this other saying, from a newer inspiration, a closer fellowship with The Light of the World: "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath punishment; and he that feareth is not made perfect in love." And this, from the fountain-head of all wisdom: "And He took a little child and set him by his side and said unto them, 'Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me; and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me; *for he that is least among you all, the same is great.*'"

I submit this to you: Is it possible to conceive of Jesus Christ as striking a little child?



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